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MIKE SHAYNE



MYSTERY MAGAZINE

JULY, 1974
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NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL DEATH RIDES THE BLACK MARKET

by BRETT HALLIDAY

Nine or ten million, it didn't make much difference, since it was all in cold cash, and, according to Michael Shayne's old friend, was all in Miami. But it was deadly cash, too; two men had died trying to get to it, and a revolution was just waiting to use it. Shayne wanted nothing to do with it until his pert, brown haired secretary, Lucy Hamilton, was almost blown out of existence by a very professional bomb!

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Death Rides the Black Market

A NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL

by BRETT HALLIDAY



LUCY HAMILTON was frowning as she reflexively fluffed her brown curls. "Michael," she said, "I think you should take this call."

The large redhead stopped the tape recorder on which he had been dictating, dropped his crossed feet from the corner of the desk, and pushed himself up in the leather chair. Lucy seldom interrupted when he was dictating, so the call had to be important.

"It's a Mr. Holt," Lucy continued. "He says he is the assistant manager at the Casandra on the Beach and that he is calling for a Jay Karst. Isn't that your friend?"

Shayne nodded and grunted with memory. Jay Karst: *bon vivant*, professional adventurer, soldier of fortune. Once Shayne and Karst had been pups on the streets of New Orleans. Then Karst had gone off in search of treasure while the redhead had found Miami.

Karst's feet never had stilled, never would until he was in a grave. Shayne had settled, become more or less stabilized. There had been occasional contact over the years, just enough so that one knew the other was still alive. But now Jay Karst was in Miami Beach.

"Michael?"

Lucy Hamilton's voice jerked the private detective out of his reverie. He grinned. "It's okay,

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Lucy Hamilton was alongside Shayne when he opened the door to the office. For a moment, the two hesitated. Something was wrong, the redhead's instinct told him. And then the bomb exploded.



Angel." Shayne swept up the receiver of the phone on his desk as Lucy turned out of the doorway. "Michael Shayne here," he said.

He kept the grin, and laughed silently as he wondered how Karst had conned the assistant manager of the Cassandra into making the call. But that was Karst, full of tricks.

The crisp voice in Shayne's ear said, "Mr. Michael Shayne, the investigator?"

Shayne's grin widened. Karst had found a live one this time: a guy all caught up in the formality and efficiency of the newest important hotel in Miami Beach. Karst loved those kind of people. He liked to curve them.

"Yeah, pal," said Shayne, going along with the Karst game. He put a grate into his voice. "Mike Shayne, private eye. You got somebody you want handled?"

In his mind's eye, Shayne saw the Cassandra's assistant manager wince. And then he laughed aloud. "Put that crazy Karst on the phone, Mr. Holt."

"I am unable to do so, Mr. Shayne," the crisp voice replied, going distant.

Shayne tensed instantly. The words had been chilling.

"I am calling, Mr. Shayne," continued the distant voice,

"because Mr. Karst has asked someone to call and the hotel doctor has given permission. I am calling, Mr. Shayne, because Mr. Karst is dying and has asked that you come to him."

II

JAY KARST was a short, bald man, permanently sunbrowned, with a heavy black beard. The impression of rotundness was deceiving. He was hard as cobalt, his muscles were flexible steel cords, and he had a nervous system that was made up of threads of ice.

There was the cunningness of a fox about him; the striking power of a cobra. He had survived a sunken submarine in the Pacific, an air crash high in the Andes, a sports car diving off an English cliff, bullets, bombs, poisons, knives. He had scars, but he breathed.

Now a heart attack was killing him.

He lay flat on his back on the hotel bed, bare to the waist, the top half of his torso brown-black, the bottom half clothed in sunbleached khaki, two-tone feet sticking straight up, the tops brown, the bottoms white. He wiggled the toes and his mouth split in an undertaker's grin as he flicked fingers at Shayne.

"Michael, me-boy," he said. The voice lacked strength; the normal resonance was gone.

Shayne frowned. "Jay!"

The grin became a grimace against the pain inside the cavern of the barrel chest and then Karst turned his head to a man in a blue business suit. "Vanish, doc?"

The hotel doctor hesitated, glanced at Shayne. The detective trailed the doctor into the front room of the suite. "How bad is Mr. Karst, doctor?" he asked.

"He's suffered a coronary. The human heart is a tough muscle, but his case is complicated by fibrillation. I administered some digitalis. On the other hand, Mr. Karst insists on talking to you.

"His excitement and anxiety could bring on another coronary. One more might kill him. Or he could survive a dozen. Rest is what he needs. I suggest you try to keep him calm." The doctor shook his head.

"I called for an ambulance, but the patient refuses to go 'til he talks with you. It's damned risky, but if we had to drag him to the ambulance, it would certainly kill him. But as soon as you've had your talk, I want him to go to a hospital. You've got a little time. The digitalis is very effective. But keep it brief."

Shayne nodded and returned to Karst.

He had trouble believing the news, but Jay Karst was a believer. He kept the grin-grimace as he said, "You're the only guy in Florida I can trust, Michael, me-boy—and I've got to have somebody I can absolutely trust.

"Eight to ten million in green American dollars, Mike. That's what we're going to discuss. Let's say ten mill, just to keep the figure round. It's right here in the Miami area. You have to find it, get rid of it."

Such talk, coming from anyone else, would have sounded like the babbling of a man whose mind was ceasing to function. But Shayne knew his friend, and knew Karst was sane. The saneness was in his eyes.

"I've been in Chile, Mike," said Karst. "Been there for months. Beautiful country, Chile. A lot of it raw yet, undeveloped. I was in Santiago for the overthrow of Allende. The Marxist boys went down hard—but not flat. A lot of 'em still exist. It's a matter of regrouping. And they will somewhere: Mexico, Cuba, Argentina, Brazil. For a while, though, they'll use terrorist tactics, get the peasants incensed. That's not hard to do among the uneducated."

"Guerrilla war." Shayne grunted.

"An excellent tool to buy time. And time and money the Marxists need."

"Ten million would be a start, huh," Shayne said.

"A drop in the bucket, as the man says—but a drop. It's here, Mike. I couldn't put my fingers on it if I could put my damned feet on the floor in this second, but the ten mill is here and I've got a couple of ideas where."

Jay Karst paused abruptly, drew a rattling breath. His bare chest arched, and then he twisted the scarred body and his mouth became screwed down. He went halfway up on his left elbow. Shayne started for the door to call the doctor.

"Hold it!" Karst gasped.

Shayne stopped, hunched and tensed.

Finally Karst flopped on his back again. He pulled in several short breaths before muttering, "No time. Let me talk while I can."

Shayne decided to let Karst have it his way, as the doctor had suggested.

Karst gave him the funereal grin again, then said, "There was a guy in Santiago, man named Carlos Merito. He was high in the Allende hierarchy. He also was a black marketeer. You know about the black market in Chile, Mike? I doubt

that you do. No matter. It exists, and it's big. Merito was a kingpin in the Allende days and he loved those American dollars, had a helluva appetite, collected plenty of 'em, and made frequent trips to Miami."

"He was stashing a cache here?"

"That's it," Karst nodded. "Piling up the greenbacks for his future—or something. I don't know what. Carlos Merito was killed. The day the junta made its move against Allende, Carlos hung tight with the *presidente* and got chewed up by some machinegun bullets."

"But not before he salted ten million dollars from a black market."

"In Santiago, Michael, me-boy, you^{die} can hear three to twenty mill. My sources say eight to ten. I go with my sources, round it off at ten."

"How'd he get ten millions past customs?" Shayne asked.

Karst lifted his palms, then the hands flopped, and were still. It was a shrug of sorts.

"But there was a Merito mistress," he said. "A woman named Avis Cordoba. She's one of these nomadic types. Europe, Asia, Africa, Canada, South America. The last three years she's been in Santiago, for eighteen months she had Merito's underwear washed for him."

"And she's in Miami today?"

"A few days after the coup when flights were resumed Avis cut. Mexico was taking in fleeing Chileans. Then she surprised me. She camped in Mexico City. I had figured she'd head straight to the loot. I put a dog on her, a Mexican government man who knows what's going on in Mexico City. My friend found out two things: one, Avis Cordoba no longer has the right papers to open U.S. doors to her. It took her quite a while to fix that. Two, she turns up a pilot who will smuggle her to Corpus Christi, Texas.

"Avis had someone waiting for her, and I was waiting in the Greyhound bus station in Corpus the night she walked in and purchased a ticket to Miami. I got on the same bus. I'm here, she's here, right here in the Cassandra. We arrived shortly after noon today."

Karst paused to concentrate on breathing, "Just a minute, Mike."

He closed his eyelids, his body became rigid, arched slightly. Shayne watched the toes curl, the hands become fists. Perspiration glossed his face and torso.

Shayne waited, his face pulled down. Once again he was tempted to call the doctor.

Then Karst's hand clamped



MIKE SHAYNE

his and there was surprising steel in the grip. "Don't, Mike," he said. "I'm telling you, I don't have that much time. And there's more you need to know. Go over there to the closet, the sliding door. Get my jacket. It has a zipped-in lining. Get inside the lining."

Shayne did so and found seven one thousand dollar bills inside the jacket.

"There's another three, four hundred dollars in my wallet. After I die, get it."

"Jay—"

"Shut up and listen, friend. Avis is upstairs, Room 1455.

My guess is she's resting. It was a long bus ride."

Karst drew a breath, continued, "She has a friend with her, guy name Juan Ribera. They're both after the ten million and if Juan gets his paws on it, you can figure the Marxists have their drop in the bucket. That can't happen, Mike."

Shayne said nothing and after a pause Karst said, "There's more, Mike. A man named S. Ash Duval."

"The writer?"

"Good," Karst breathed. "You know him."

"Wrong, pal. I know of him. Some people call him a recluse. Others think he's Miami's Howard Hughes. He has a compound. There are those who will tell you he hasn't been outside the compound walls in ten years."

"But people have gone through the wall gate into the compound, Michael, me-boy. And those people include Carlos Merito. Merito and Duval were friends. The compound is where Merito hung his hat during his trips to Miami. I think the money's there. Maybe in a private vault. I don't know. I figured if Avis headed for Duval's, it would clinch it. That's where you were to come in. See," Karst grinned, "I was cutting you in anyway. I fig-

ured you'd know how to get in the joint. Or know someone who could. Stop Avis Cordoba and the Marxist boys from getting it."

"Duval would turn over ten million to her?" Shayne asked.

"Maybe. Maybe not. It depends on Duval aspirations."

"Like?"

"God knows what businesses he has in Chile. The money could buy his companies a lot of influence. Protect him from the 'nationalization' so many companies get hit with."

"Which puts Avis Cordoba where?"

Karst shrugged. "Ten mill gets you a long way in South America. She's been a power in Chile. Maybe she and Juan figure on returning, setting up a counter-coup, a return to power."

Shayne said, "Duval could tell both of them to climb a rope."

"Uh-huh," Karst said, his eyelids going down again. He winced. "Avis, Avis/Juan and Ash could damn well have a headknocker. For your sake, I hope they do. It will give you the time you need to search—"

Shayne shook his head. "This is CIA stuff, Jay."

"No!" Karst burst.

Shayne was surprised at the power of Karst's voice.

"They'll only complicate it,

Mike!" Karst said. "They'll make it complicated, call in the State Department. State will debate it and while they're debating the money can disappear into bank accounts somewhere. It's you! You have to find the money, Mike, and get rid of it!"

Karst straightened suddenly, gripped the mattress. It was as if he had been stabbed in the back. The bright little eyes popped open, remained round. His jaw dropped. His skin glossed. Sound rattled deep in his throat. And then he relaxed his grip.

Shayne leaped to him, grabbed his shoulders to support him.

Jay Karst was beyond support. When the ambulance crew arrived, there was nothing for them to do.

III

MIKE SHAYNE used the telephone in the front room of Jay Karst's suite and made the arrangements for his friend's funeral. He knew Karst had no family. And Shayne wasn't going to leave it to the County. After the body had been taken, he sat for a long time smoking a cigarette and scowling. He was deeply troubled.

On the one hand, he felt loyalty to Karst and he was intrigued with the woman and

the man upstairs in Room 1455, the supposed black market cache, S. Ash Duval.

Or there was Guy Chambers. Chambers once had been with the CIA. Then one day Chambers' car had been bombed. Unfortunately, Chambers' wife had been inside the car. Chambers had thrown in the towel after that, remained reasonably intoxicated for a year, finally had put the bottles aside and gone into the real estate business. But Chambers still could have some CIA contact. Once CIA, always CIA.

Shayne stubbed out the cigarette, found a phone book and used the Yellow Pages. It was ten minutes after five o'clock in the afternoon. There was a chance he could catch Guy Chambers in his real estate office. He dialed the number and got repeated rings, no more. He put the phone together.

Shayne left the Cassandra. He'd find Chambers. Outside, the sun was low in the west sky, cast a golden sheen on the modernistic structure with its pampered green trimmings and bubbling fountains. He went to his parked car in long strides. A young man in black-rimmed glasses had the hood up and was bent over the motor of the car in the next stall.

The young man came out

from under the hood as Shayne approached. "Do you know anything about motors, sir?" he asked.

"No," said the redhead.

He brushed past the young man, reached for the door handle of the convertible. And in that instant, the premonition of danger swept him. Or perhaps it was the hiss of an indrawn breath.

Shayne ducked reflexively, tucked his chin into his chest, and whirled. But it already was too late. He had a flashing glimpse of the sap as it came down toward his skull and in the corner of his eye he saw another man come up out of the bottom of the car with the hood up.

The sap glanced off Shayne's head and ricocheted against his shoulder. Pain streaked like fire through his body and he went down on one knee. The young man brought the sap down again and the redhead suddenly lost all awareness.

When he came awake, Shayne knew two things immediately: he was on a bed, and there was a strong hygienic smell. He groaned and stirred. He suddenly became conscious of a throbbing headache. He opened his eyes, stared at a blank, light green wall. He was stretched out on his side.

He rolled onto his back. Two

young men stood over him. Each was well-dressed. One wore black-rimmed glasses. Shayne remembered him coming out from under the hood of a car. The other guy had very white teeth and looked like anybody's bright young executive.

The young man with the eyeglasses held a sap in his right hand and he used the sap to tap Shayne's forehead.

"Far enough, Mr. Shayne," he said in a pleasant voice. "Just stay right where you are and we will get along fine. Your wallet credentials say you are a confidential investigator. We find that interesting—especially since you had a rap session with Mr. Karst before he died. Incidentally, we also find that death interesting. The hotel people say he suffered a heart attack. Did he? Or did you kill him? We'd like to know."

"I've got a helluva headache," growled the redhead. He moved to sit up.

The young man cracked the back of Shayne's hand with the sap. Shayne doubled with the pain, then didn't stir. "I told you," said the young man, voice still pleasant, "stay right where you are."

Shayne brought his head up slowly, stared hard at the two young men. They looked at

ease, confident and competent. Eyeglasses asked, "Did you kill him, Mr. Shayne? And, if you did, how did you do it to make a doctor think it was just a heart attack?"

Shayne said nothing. From the look of the room, Shayne knew he was in a motel. The unit looked clean and unused. There were two beds. Neither had been turned down. A closet door was open and there was nothing inside. He could see into the bath too. The sanitary band was still wrapped around the lid of the toilet.

So the two young hoods had taken the room for interrogation purposes. It was better than driving around the city and occasionally sapping a guy in the back seat.

"Mr. Shayne?" said Eyeglasses.

"George," said the other young man, "I feel he is going to be stubborn. Perhaps you should flick Mr. Shayne a few times just to convince him we can't be here all night."

"Perhaps, Arnie," said George. And then he whipped the sap viciously across Shayne's shin. The redhead's leg immediately became numb and he grimaced.

"All right," said George. "Never mind the details of the death. Tell us what Mr. Karst told you."



Shayne managed, "We talked about killing two apes."

George sighed and Arnie put out a hand. "The sap, George. I haven't had a workout in a long time."

George extended the sap. Arnie gripped it. And in that instant their hands were together. Shayne lunged and captured a wrist in each hand. He yanked and rolled toward the wall, pulling the two men down on top of him. He brought a knee up hard and George grunted.

Shayne released the wrists then and flailed wildly with elbows and feet. He managed to work his body around until his

shoulder blades were pressed against the wall. George was hanging on to his left leg, clawing. Arnie had regained his feet, was staggering back. Shayne used the back of his hand to crack the glasses from George's nose.

Arnie had caught his balance, straightened. His eyes were filled with hate now and his mouth was screwed around as he plunged and brought the sap down. Shayne caught his wrist in both hands, twisted and fired his right foot into Arnie's middle.

Arnie dropped the sap on the bed and reeled away, coughing and gasping. Shayne brought the sap around in a tennis backhand motion and just grazed the top of George's skull. George howled. And then Shayne used his free foot to kick George from his left leg. George rolled across the carpeting as the redhead bounced from the bed.

Arnie was already outside the front door of the unit. He carried a glass ashtray in his right hand. He fired the ashtray at Shayne. The redhead curled aside, but the ashtray glanced off his ear. New pain-splayed through Shayne's skull as he pitched across the room and through the open bath door. He sprawled across the toilet.

Then he flipped his body into a sitting position on the bath floor, brought his right leg up, ready to fire with it and held the sap for a roundhouse swing. But George and Arnie were gone. Shayne stared. And then he heard a car motor start.

He scrambled to his feet and bolted outside. The car was moving out fast, swaying slightly, tires peeling. Shayne sagged against the doorway. Motel guests outside had stopped and were staring towards Shayne.

A harried looking man broke through the people and approached Shayne. He stopped a few feet away. "What is going on here?" he wanted to know. "What is this disturbance?"

"Who are you?" growled Shayne.

"The manager. What is—"

"Did you rent this unit to a couple of guys a little while ago?"

"I did. They paid in advance. Who are you?"

Shayne stuffed the sap in his coat pocket, got out his wallet, looked inside. Jay Karst's money was gone. He looked at the manager, who was watching him. "Where am I?" Shayne demanded, "What is this place?"

"The Mariner, but..."

"How far to the Cassandra?"

"Why...it's just up the

street. Three blocks. But you. . ."

"Thanks pal." Shayne moved out, striding long. And then the voice behind him cried out: "Sir, wait! The police are coming! My wife has called them!"

Shayne kept walking. He didn't want police. Especially in Miami Beach. This was Peter Painter land. Peter Painter was chief of detectives, a pompous, impeccably dressed little dude with a hairline mustache and an inborn animosity toward private detectives. That animosity became quivering anger when Shayne invaded Collins Avenue and environs. Painter and Shayne were natural enemies.

A simple motel mugging beef never would get to Painter—until some smart Miami Beach cop recognized the name Shayne. If that were to happen, a redhead could be spending a night in the Beach cop shop.

IV

MIKE SHAYNE turned from the Collins Avenue sidewalk into the front parking lot of the Cassandra. His car had not been moved. He used the Julia Tuttle Causeway to cross into Miami, then turned north on Biscayne Boulevard. He felt bruised and skinned and the headache thumped. There was a small lump on the back of his

skull and split skin where the ashtray had struck him. The blood from the skin opening had dried now, but the cut smarted.

Lucy Hamilton's apartment was on a side street between the boulevard and the western shore of Biscayne Bay. It was large and square and tastefully decorated. Lucy's brown eyes widened slightly when she answered Shayne's buzz. Then she took his arm and marched him across the sitting room and back to the bath.

She sat him on the lid of the toilet and started taking things down from the medicine cabinet. She wore tight purple pants and a white top and, arched slightly as she stood on bare toes to pick from the shelves of the medicine cabinet, she was tonic to the redhead's aches. For a moment, he forgot the death of Jay Karst and the handiwork of the two young men.

He grinned. "I don't require surgery, Angel."

She cleansed the wound on the side of his head without saying anything. She smelled warm and freshly bathed and perfumed. Shayne started to reach for her and she daubed a salve across the cut. He jerked with the sudden sting.

She stepped back, looked down at him. She was somber.

"What happened to you, Michael?"

It all came crashing back and Shayne scowled and stood. He used fingers to again examine the lump on the back of his head. Lucy got up on toes, forced his head down. She examined, then announced, "No broken skin."

"Jay Karst is dead, Angel," Shayne said, going out to the sitting room. He sat in an overstuffed chair. "Heart attack. It was the damndest thing. He knew he was going to die."

"What did he want?" she asked from the kitchen. She entered the room with a glass of cognac in one hand and a glass of ice water in the other. She handed both glasses to Shayne.

He sipped as he told her Jay Karst's story. Then she took his empty glasses and refilled them. "And after you left the Cassandra?" she said with one eyebrow lifted.

He filled her in on the two heavies.

"Well, if they were strangers to you, Michael, but they knew you had been with Jay Karst they, obviously, must have been watching his room."

"Uh-huh," Shayne agreed, using the thumb and forefinger of his right hand to tug his left earlobe. "But where did they come from, Angel? Have they been tailing Jay for days, say

from Santiago or Mexico City? Or were they sicced on him by someone else? And why were they on him? Do they know what Jay was doing? Do they know about the cache? If it's the money they're after, why lay on me? Jay didn't have it. Don't they know about the Cordoba woman, this Juan, and Duval? It smells to me, Angel, as if they don't.

"It smells like they figured Jay was on something, but they didn't know what. They could be just a couple of cowboys who knew Jay Karst was a treasure hunter, knew that if they stuck with him long enough he might lead them to some loot.

"I think that somewhere along the line, maybe in Chile, maybe in Mexico, they got wind that Jay Karst was out after big treasure, but they don't know what that treasure is, so they latched on Jay. Either they got wind or someone else did and hired them to shadow Jay, the curve coming, of course, when he was taken out of the Cassandra in a bag. That must have thrown these two a helluva whiplash and they grabbed the first life raft that came along. Me.

"They had been watching Jay and they saw me arrive. They knew I had been with him when he died. So they leaned on me. You notice they didn't

kill me. And they could have easily. They could have sapped me to death, dumped me into Biscayne if they wanted to be rid of me. But that's the point: they wanted to know what I knew."

"Yes," Lucy agreed, frowning. She pulled at her lower lip. "But you said they ran, Michael. Why would they suddenly run? Oh, sure, you were fighting them, but, after all, it was two against one. Eventually, they probably would have worn you down."

"Two reasons, I think, Angel," Shayne said, finishing the cognac and drinking the ice water. "One, I had their weapon. Two, we were making a helluva racket, attracting attention from outside." He hesitated, then gave Lucy a one-sided grin. "And, of course, there's a third. I just might have whipped both of them, made *them* do a little talking."

She left her curled position on the sofa, took his glasses. He held up a palm, stood. "No more. I want to find Guy Chambers. He could have some ideas."

She frowned again. "But Guy isn't with the CIA now. Shouldn't you—"

Shayne made his grin crooked. "Do you know a CIA man in all of Miami?"

"No."

"Neither do I. But Guy does."

Her face cleared. She nodded. "All right, Michael. For a moment there, I thought you were harboring an idea about doing what Jay Karst asked you to do."

He kept his grin. "Angel, if I ever had ten million dollars in my hand at one time—no matter how I came across it—I wouldn't know what to do with it."

He went to her front door.

"Michael?"

He looked back at her over his shoulder. She looked very appetizing in the thigh-tight purple pants, filled white blouse and round brown eyes.

"Those two men could be out there again," she said.

"Right." He winked at her. "If I get another lump, I'll be back."

"I'll be here," she said simply.

V

GUY CHAMBERS was a tall, lean, greyed man of mid-forty years who drank only beer these days and had one watering hole. Pete's was a deep, slim, dim place, much like an air terminal lounge. The bar filled the left wall, tiny cube-shaped tables fronting on a single built-in leather bench filled the right.

Guy Chambers always occupied the back stool at the bar. From this vantage, he could put his shoulder blades against the wall and watch the comings and goings at Pete's with interest or disinterest.

Mike Shayne noticed that his appearance tweaked Guy Chambers' interest. The real estate man pushed from the wall, swung into the bar, leaned on his elbows as Shayne occupied the next stool. "Mike!" he said.

"Hi, Guy," Shayne said. He turned and told the sprite girl behind the bar, "Cognac and ice water. Separate glasses."

"And the best cognac, Patsy," echoed Guy Chambers. "What's doing, Mike?" He sipped from a fresh mug of beer.

Shayne laid it out for Guy Chambers. He knew the walls of Pete's did not have ears. Chambers said nothing until Shayne had finished talking. Then he ordered another mug of beer and asked, "When's the funeral?"

"Tomorrow morning."

"You know," said Chambers, sounding as if he was dragging from another century, "I worked the Latin countries once. I never heard of your friend Jay Karst down there though."

"He moved around."

"But I do have a faint recol-

lection of an Avis Cordoba. Don't think it was Latin though. Think it was Europe. Italy maybe. Perhaps Spain. Or France."

"She keeps moss from her feet, I hear."

"Ten million, that's a lot of scratch, Mike. What's your next step?"

"I need to talk to someone from Uncle Sam. Who in Miami?"

"Me."

Shayne ordered another cognac and ice water. "I thought you were out. About five, six years ago!"

Chambers emptied the mug, told Patsy to bring a refill. Then he said, "If you hadn't found me tonight, Mike, I'd have been on your Flagler Street doorstep in the morning. We've been onto Duval—and the whole outfit—for some time."

"Oh, boy," said Shayne, wagging his head.

"It's what keeps the world spinning, Mike—we think."

"You going to fill me in?"

"S. Ash Duval has the cash. We make it about fourteen million. We figure it's inside the compound. We've searched the banks, the savings and loans. But there is not a hint in Miami or Miami Beach. It almost has to be at Duval's place. There's an outside chance we

missed at one of the institutions, but it's remote."

Shayne sipped his cognac.

"We figured Avis and new boyfriend would show," Chambers continued. "We were surprised by Karst. We got on to his interest in Mexico City."

"Did I surprise you, too?"

"Like the heart attack Karst had."

"And a couple of heavies?"

Chambers drank beer, frowned. "We don't have them made, Mike. Not yet. Not for certain. We're working on them."

"Then you don't mind if I give them to you totally?" Shayne said.

"What do you mean?"

"It's yours, friend. The whole bit. I'm out."

"Wrong, Mike. We want you in. You're suddenly our boy. Nice, clean private eye, no ties with Uncle."

"Forget it."

"Can't, Mike. Uncle doesn't mess around in South America—in spite of what some people think. So it's got to be a private citizen who turns this trick. We figured it was going to be Jay Karst, but he died. On the other hand, he put it all on a platter for you before he conked out. That makes you an A-1 boy with Uncle."

"A question, Guy: You said you'd been working on this



some time. Exactly how long?"

"Months," Chambers admitted.

"And if there hadn't been a Jay Karst?"

Chambers remained silent for a few seconds, nursed his beer, then said, "We would have worked out something."

"Right!" agreed Shayne. "So work it out now, Pal!"

"I am," said Chambers. "You're in. You know too much."

"Come on!"

"Mike," said Chambers, sliding the redhead a glance and suddenly sounding menacing, "don't force our hand. Nobody wants to lean on you."

"That's a threat, Guy."

"Mike?" The menacing tone, the threat was gone. Guy Chambers sounded as if he was a Sunday School teacher drawing on patience with a restless boy who preferred to be out fishing. "We need you to pull this off. There's a lot at stake. It's all I'm going to say until you tell me whether you're in or out."

"Guy," said Shayne, waving for a fresh cognac, "if I'd wanted a complicated life I would've shot for the priesthood, or got involved in politics, maybe become a school teacher. But I've kept it simple all of these years. Just been a little old Florida private detective. No sweat in that. Sure, a man runs into a hassle once in a while, but—"

"What we're after is simple, Mike," Chambers interrupted. "All we want you to do is get the money for us."

"Guy, doesn't anybody believe in moving in, making arrests, breaking up gangs and/or conspiracies these days?" Shayne asked.

"So Immigration picks up a couple of illegal entries," said Chambers. "Big deal."

Shayne thought about it while warming the fresh cognac in his large palm. "You haven't got any leverage to use on Duval?"

"Mike, the guy is an author.

Successful. Books, TV, movies, foreign sales, reprints. Sure, he spreads his Marxist jazz in his writings. But he can do that in the good old U.S. of A., remember? More important—from our point of observation—he hasn't been outside the walls of his compound long enough in the last few years to break the simplest traffic law. The guy lives clean."

"What happened to the IRS? The last I heard they hadn't been dissolved."

Chambers nodded in his beer. "Now you're with it, fella. IRS. They're leaning. Hard."

"And?"

Chambers' face fell a notch. "Nothing so far. Every dime in place. Uncle should have Duval's accountants. They're experts."

Shayne swilled half of his cognac, ignored the ice water chaser. He sat for several seconds in contemplative silence before he said, "We're going to back up a bit, Guy, and, by God, this time around you're going to put it all out there for Michael to see."

Chambers said simply, "I haven't been holding anything back."

"Avis Cardoba. Will Duval hand over the cache to her? I mean, can she walk through the walls of his compound to—

morrow morning and come out fifteen minutes later loaded for life?"

"She's holed up at the Cassandra," said Chambers. "I think that's your answer. If she had been expected or was welcome at the compound, she would be staying there. When she was inside on previous occasions, she was with Merito. Merito is dead. Avis Cordoba probably will never again see the inside of those walls."

"So what happens to her?"

"Duval could care less, I think."

"What about Ribera?" Shayne asked.

"We're not excited about him. He's a new lover. I'm more leery of the boys who were waiting for you outside the Cassandra," Chambers said. "That smells like a junta operation to me. They could've been put on Avis Cordoba in Santiago, spotted Karst, then got interested in you when Karst summoned."

"Or they could be hired hands. Local talent. Watchdogs. No more. Just a couple of juniors who are supposed to report to some unknown soul every hour on the hour. Maybe they caught you on the half hour, panicked a little, snapped on some heat to score points. If they were assigned to ride with Karst, his death had to be a big

goddamn loop around the neck and jerk of the rope. Enough probably to make any watchdog scramble."

Chambers paused. "I guess maybe we ought to be thinking about taking them out of the picture. Getting them out of our hair, so to speak. We don't know enough about them to take chances really."

Chambers finished his beer. "You remember the guy with the beard who came in a spell ago, had a quick drink, cut?"

Shayne was instantly suspicious. "Yeah?"

"He's on your two friends. He has a partner. Two on two, it is. It probably means your sappers are outside somewhere. They could've tailed you from the motel to Lucy's to here. Frankly, I'm a little disturbed by the fact that we've been sitting here together for at least thirty minutes now. Your friends could make a connection, you know? And I can't afford that."

"But it's really no sweat anyway. The guys wouldn't pop back up to bother anyone—including your friend Will Gentry, chief of police. Incidentally, have you talked to Gentry about this?"

"If your boys have been on the heavies, and the heavies have been on me, then you know I haven't been anyplace

but from the Cassandra to Lucy Hamilton's apartment, to here," Shayne said pointedly.

"Except there are telephones," Chambers said. "And I assume you pay Lucy Hamilton enough to afford a telephone in her place."

"Gentry's in Seattle. There's a convention of chiefs," growled Shayne.

"Ahhh," said Chambers. "Good. And there's no one else at police headquarters you would confide in?"

Shayne frowned, and Chambers laughed gently. "We like to pick the time to bring in the locals," he said.

"You and me, Guy," said the detective. "No one else—so far."

"What about Lucy Hamilton?"

"What about her?"

Chambers slid Shayne a dark glance. "How much does she know?"

"She knows what Karst told me. Confiding in my secretary just happens to be the way I operate my business, pal. You don't think anything about sitting here and yakking about maybe going outside and giving the word to chop off a couple of heads. I don't think anything about confiding in Lucy Hamilton."

Guy Chambers was silent for a long time before he said gently, "Okay, Mike. I guess I

asked for that. Well, to the important problem: how do we set it up so you can clean ten million from Duval's pockets?"

"We don't, Guy," said Shayne. "I'm out."

He left his stool abruptly, yanked down his tie, opened his shirt collar. He filled his lungs, exhaled. He'd made a decision, and he suddenly felt as if two thousand pounds had been lifted from his shoulders.

He lit a cigarette. "I figure I've done my patriotic duty, as they say. I've passed my information along to the right people."

Other than to dig his elbows a little deeper into the bar surface, Guy Chambers didn't move. He sat hunched, neck down into his shoulders, head shot forward. Finally he breathed, "Lord, you make things tough, Mike."

VI

MIKE SHAYNE walked out of Pete's. The Miami night was still young, warm. A gentle breeze wafted. There was activity up and down the sidewalk. But Shayne suddenly felt fatigued. He wanted a long shower, a good night's sleep.

He kept a sharp eye in his rear view mirror as he drove to his apartment. No one seemed to be shadowing him. Maybe

the two heavies had tired, too. He showered, took two aspirins, stretched out on the bed, slept.

Wednesday morning glowed. Jay Karst would have appreciated the sparkle of the day.

The funeral was over at eleven-thirty. Shayne took Lucy Hamilton out to a somber lunch. Neither had much to say. They returned to the Flagler Street office and the detective inserted his door key. He stiffened without turning the key. The door already was unlocked. He turned and frowned at Lucy.

"I know I locked it behind us," she said.

Shayne entered the office. No one was inside and everything looked in place—except for the small black bag on the floor in front of Lucy's desk. It looked much like a doctor's bag.

The detective smelled danger. Every sense suddenly was alive and he felt the hairs stir on the back of his neck. "Get out, Lucy," he commanded in a hard voice.

They backed from the office as the bag exploded.

It was a strange sensation. It was like having a front row seat for the gigantic bursting of a meteor. Brilliant light flared and then there was a tremendous noise. An invisible force lifted Mike Shayne and seemed

to pitch him with no effort. He lost all control of himself.

Abruptly there was pain in his shoulder blades and along his spine and the back of his head smashed against something solid. He went down on his buttocks and fought for awareness. He shook his head hard, realized suddenly that he was sitting on the corridor floor outside his office, against a wall.

Opposite him, the office door hung tilted from the upper hinge. The door was splintered and puffs of smoke and dust clogged the air. But he could see into the office and the litter made him angry.

Then he looked to his right and saw Lucy Hamilton sprawled on the floor, face down. Lucy didn't move. She looked dead.

Shayne crawled to her, a roar caught deep in his throat. She was breathing, but her eyelids were down and she was very still. One leg was cocked crazily under her and there was split skin on the side of her neck. Blood oozed from the split.

The detective became conscious of having people around him. He pushed up straight on his knees and looked around. The faces registered surprise, fear, curiosity, caution. He recognized some of the faces. Then the noise reached him: the

words, a gasp here, an exclamation there. Someone seemed to be grasping control of the chaos; someone was now giving orders.

A police ambulance team appeared out of nowhere, two young men and a young woman in white. They moved efficiently, quickly. One of the men checked Shayne, lifted his eyelids, looked deep into his eyes. He finally patted Shayne's shoulder. "See how you do on your feet, man."

The redhead stood. He wobbled slightly, then strength flowed into his limbs from an unknown source. He straightened to stand large and spread-legged and tense, a bit ragged here and there, but he suddenly was all power and triggered.

Lucy had been placed on a stretcher, blanketed. She was pale, unmoving. The two men in white wheeled her away while the woman remained with Shayne.

"I'm okay, doll," Shayne growled. "Let's roll."

"Mike!"

Shayne whirled. A huge Negro man, who was constructed like a professional football tackle, faced the detective. The Negro was alone, dressed conservatively and neat in a dark suit, white shirt and pale red tie.

"I was about three blocks away," said Jeff Collier. "In the car. I heard the blip on the radio, caught the address."

Jeff Collier was one of Will Gentry's top people. He had earned an assistant police chief's position. Shayne and Collier had worked on other cases.

Collier said calmly, "You look all caught up in frustration, man. Let's cool it a little, huh? Do some thinking, rapping."

"Lucy's been hurt, Jeff," Shayne stated.

"I know, man," Collier said, nodding. "I saw." He looked at the ambulance nurse.

"Preliminary," she said, "I'd say most of her trouble is from being stunned. There are some abrasions, bruises. The hospital probably will want to hold her overnight. I've got to run."

Shayne started to trail her. Collier said, "What the hell can you do at a hospital, Mike?"

Shayne stopped in mid-stride, looked over his shoulder at Collier, then turned back. Other cops had arrived. Collier put them to work. They cleared and blocked off the corridor.

Collier and Shayne entered the detective's office. A cop in a business suit was on his knees where the black bag had been. He looked up at Collier. "For starters, I'm going to say it was

some kind of pipe bomb," he said.

Shayne said, "There was a bag." He explained.

Then Collier asked, "What kind of a case are you on, Mike?"

Shayne scowled. "I'm not," he snapped.

Collier grunted. "So do we want some guy with an ancient grudge?"

Shayne shrugged, remained silent.

"Hey, Mike!"

The salutation interrupted Shayne's thinking. He turned and looked at his friend Tim Rourke, the veteran newspaperman. Rourke was out of breath, puffing, hat shoved to the back of his head, narrow face drawn. Rourke was a tall, cadaverous-looking man who had worn out several typewriters for the *Daily News* over the years. He also had dodged a few bullets with Mike Shayne.

"I heard on the police radio at the office," he said, still breathing hard. "Good to see you standing on your two feet, Mike."

"They've taken Lucy to the hospital, Tim."

"Oh, damn! How bad?"

"Don't know. Just knocked out, I think. But it could be worse. I want to go over there in a little bit."

"I'll go with you."



"You don't need me, Jeff," said Shayne. "You've got all I know. When you're finished here have the building man lock up the office the best he can. His name is Jake. I'll check in with you later this afternoon."

Collier waved the detective and the newspaperman away. Riding down in the elevator, Rourke said, "What gives, Mike?"

Shayne shrugged off Rourke. He was worried about Lucy. He didn't feel like getting involved in the black market story, and Rourke, he knew, understood

the shrug, and wouldn't press him.

VII

RIDING TOGETHER with Mike, Shayne in the car, Tim Rourke shook his head and said, "The moon must have been right last night, this must be a day for bombers. There was one over in Miami Beach, too. I heard a little about it on the police radio as I was leaving the office to come to your place. But they had two DOA's over there. The way I pieced it together a room at the Cassandra blew up."

For a fraction of a second, Shayne had trouble keeping the car on the street. He shot Rourke a glance. "Two dead?"

"Man and a woman, the way I got it," Rourke nodded.

Shayne steeled himself, kept himself under control, but Rourke was a man of keen observation. "You're gripping that damned steering wheel as if you're going to have it for lunch, friend. Is there a connection between your bomber and the one on the Beach?"

They were at the hospital. Shayne parked and rolled out of the car. "It's complicated, Tim," he said as they marched into the hospital on matching long strides. "And, at the moment, Lucy is more important."

"Okay," Rourke said simply.

They were not allowed to see Lucy Hamilton. After about fifteen minutes of searching, it was discovered she still was in Emergency. No one knew her condition. Shayne squared his wide shoulders and raised his voice a notch. Someone got on the telephone again, found out that Lucy Hamilton was to be held overnight for observation. She would be taken to a room after forms had been completed.

"Records must be kept," explained the girl. "Those people in Business just go bananas if they don't get the proper—"

"Honey?"

"I'll tell Business you'd like to have the forms completed later, Mr. Shayne," the girl said quickly.

"Mike," Rourke put in sagely, "if you want to go over to the Beach and nose around, I'll stick here, see that Lucy gets squared away."

"I've got to find a guy, Tim."

Shayne went to his apartment, put on a rig with a .45 snug inside then returned to his car. He was feeding on logic now, beginning with two heavies who liked to use a sap. One or both could know how to construct pipe bombs, too, their reason for constructing and using them unimportant at the moment. The heavies were under the eye of Guy Chambers' people.

But Shayne couldn't find Chambers. He spent the morning and most of the afternoon checking out the CIA man's haunts. It was as though Chambers had vanished. Finally Shayne quit the search.

He only briefly debated about driving to the Cassandra, getting first hand information. That would mean exposing himself to Peter Painter. Painter would be on the bombing. He also would by now be aware of the bombing of Shayne's office. And Painter was a lot of obnoxious things, but he was not dumb. Shayne's interest in the Cassandra bombing, plus Shayne being bombed would mean "tie-in" to Painter. He'd keep a redheaded private detecting hanging from his thumbs in a Miami Beach cubbyhole for hours—if necessary—to get the story.

It was five-thirty in the afternoon when Shayne returned to the hospital. He found Lucy Hamilton in a private room. A cop in a business suit stood outside her door. Shayne, explained himself and the cop said, "She's doing okay, I hear, Mr. Shayne. Collier wants to see you."

Lucy was propped at a forty-five degree angle in the bed. She looked a little wan, but healthy. There was a patch on her neck. Shayne kissed her

brow. It was damp. He squeezed her hands.

"I'm still a little woozy," she said. "That's all, Michael. Who blew us up?"

"I've got an idea, Angel," said Shayne grimly. "Has Collier been here?"

"Yes."

"You tell him about Jay Karst, the two heavies from last night?"

"No. I told him I had no idea who might try to kill you...me...us."

"Good girl," Mike Shayne said, thinking hard. Then he asked, "You got everything you need? They treating you all right here?"

She worked up a gentle smile. "I'm fine, Michael." She paused, the smile disappeared, a frown replaced it. "Are you looking for those two men?"

"I'm just about to turn this city inside out, Angel."

"Be careful."

"I'll be back here at nine in the morning. Think they'll turn you loose by then?"

"I hope so."

Shayne kissed her damp brow again and walked out. He left the hospital and drove to Pete's. But Guy Chambers still hadn't come in. Shayne stepped outside. In the early evening, the small side street in front of Pete's was virtually deserted.

Two men came from the

alley, walking side by side, chattering as if one had just sold Biscayne Bay to the other. Shayne gave them a glance. They were strangers.

He started for his car and the men flanked him suddenly. They were well-dressed men, wore fresh white shirts with stiff cuffs and flashing links. Each was freshly shaved. One had cultivated a very black mustache. He put something hard against Shayne's rib cage.

"Come with us, Mr. Shayne."

"Who are you monkies?" growled the redhead, unmoving.

The hardness against his ribs went deeper. "Please," said the man with the mustache, "can't we do this gently?" He had chosen his position well. There was no room for Shayne to maneuver. He sighed and followed directions. The men remained flanked, but far enough behind Shayne so that he couldn't reach them before mustache shot.

Shayne was directed to the alley and into the back seat of a long, shiny, grey car. Mustache got in beside him and removed the .45 from its rig under Shayne's coat. "My name is Ralph," he smiled. "Elmer will drive."

They rolled smoothly along Rickenbacker Causeway to Key Biscayne. They passed Crandon

Park Zoo. No one spoke during the drive. Impatience finally caught up with Shayne.

"Anybody want to lay a little knowledge on me?"

"Shut up," said Ralph.

They turned from the street toward a wall, stopped at a gate, headlights bright. A man came to the car and looked in. No words were spoken. And then the gates swung open electrically and they rolled up a long U-shaped drive. At the top of the inverted U the car was stopped in front of wide steps that went up to a glistening mansion.

Shayne was taken up the steps and inside to soft, quiet plushness. He was ushered on up a wide staircase and down a corridor.

"S. Ash is receiving?" he asked sarcastically.

Neither of his ushers said a word. Elmer opened a door. Shayne moved into a richly-appointed sitting room. The walls were books. Four people occupied chairs in the room.

Guy Chambers grunted, "You, too, huh, Mike?"

The two young sappers didn't say a word. They looked uneasy and wary.

The woman was a dark skinned beauty with glossy black hair. She probably was in her mid-thirties. She wore a pink pantsuit and many stone rings.

"Meet Avis Cordoba," said Chambers as Ralph and Elmer departed.

Shayne heard a door lock click into place."

VIII

MIKE SHAYNE said, with sarcasm, "Am I to assume that we are the guests of S. Ash Duval?"

Chambers nodded. "He hasn't made an appearance, but this is his castle."

Shayne looked square at Avis Cordoba. "I jumped to a conclusion earlier today, Miss Cordoba. I thought you were dead."

Her beautiful face remained a mask as she said, "Juan and a maid were killed by the bomb. I was downstairs in the coffee shop. When I realized the explosion had occurred in my room I immediately left the hotel. I could not afford to be questioned by the police since I do not have the proper papers to be in the United States. I was walking away from the hotel when I was picked up by those two men who brought you here. I was put in this room with those two men over there."

Shayne looked at the heavies. They stiffened. Their eyes hung on him. He went to them. Both began moving around, acting as if they might be sitting on nails. Shayne held out a flat



palm, didn't say a word. The heavies looked at each other, then the one called Arnie stuck a hand inside his coat and brought out the fold of money. He put it in Shayne's palm.

The detective stuffed it into his pocket.

"I still owe you boys something," he growled, "but right now I want one of you to unload."

It was George who finally burst, "Man, we don't know what's going on! We were wheeling away from the motel last night, got flanked into the curbing by those two guys, and brought here. We've been held here—prisoners—almost twenty-four hours now! What is this jazz?"

Shayne scowled. "You were picked up after leaving me last night?" He flashed a look at Chambers.

Chambers shrugged. "A slight case of misinterpretation, Mike," he said easily. "When my man came into Pete's, had his quick drink, I thought he was telling me George and Arnie were under wraps outside somewhere. What he really was telling me was George and Arnie had got out of pocket. I read my man wrong, that's all."

Shayne grunted in thought and Chambers continued, "Duval's people picked me up as I was leaving my office this afternoon. I don't get it. Why is he rounding up everyone?"

"Is S. Ash Duval one to panic?" snapped the redhead.

"I'll vote no," said Chambers.

Shayne looked at the woman.

"No," she echoed.

Shayne kept his eyes on her. "I think we're in big trouble, doll. You got any other opinion? I understand you probably know Duval better than anyone else in the room."

She clamped her lips, remained silent for a long time. Finally she said, "I think he intends to steal a very large amount of money."

"Merito's black market treasure," nodded Shayne.

The woman showed mild surprise. "Then you know about it?"

"Is the money here in the house?" Shayne asked.

"It was at one time," she nodded. "There is a vault."

"How come Merito made Duval his treasurer?"

Avis Cordoba seemed to debate before she said, "Carlos Merito intended to build a fortune, and then an army—Carlos planned to buy an army—and someday he would be the president of Chile. Chile is an exceedingly rich country in many ways, Mr. Shayne, but undeveloped. Mr. Duval would have been second in the hierarchy, I think."

Shayne shot a look at Guy Chambers.

Chambers nodded. "It could happen in Chile, Mike."

"Okay," Shayne tugged his ear, returned his stare to Avis Cordoba. "You figured on doing

just what, by coming to Miami?"

"There is slightly more than nine million dollars here, Mr. Shayne. Other than Mr. Duval, I probably am the only person in the world with that knowledge. Carlos kept very clean records. I also am familiar with Carlos' street operations, I know his key people, how his system worked. Even though we lived together, there is no way I could simply walk in here and claim Carlos' treasure and expect Mr. Duval to turn it over to me. But I did feel that my combination of knowledge would be of value to him and—naturally—I had a price."

"Then Duval knows why you are here."

"Not exactly. He refused to accept my telephone messages. But I assume he has made guesses."

"Where did Juan Ribera figure?"

She lifted palms and shoulders. "Carlos Merito was killed. Juan was my new lover. No more. But now he, too, is dead."

"You said Juan and a maid were killed. . ."

Shayne let it hang and Avis Cordoba took it up immediately. "Yes. I had gone downstairs to the coffee shop. Juan was to join me. I can only speculate, of course, but I will say someone gave the maid a package to deliver to my room.

The package contained a bomb. It exploded."

Shayne sucked a deep breath and turned to the two young heavies. "Okay, boys it's telling time."

They looked at each other. Finally both shrugged and it was George who said, "George Kelly here, University of Southern California, class of '69. . ."

They were a pair of wanderers, looking for anything loose, mostly rich, middle-aged ladies. George Kelly had been with such a lady in Mexico City when she had spotted Jay Karst in the lobby of a hotel. She had known Jay Karst from another day. Kelly's interest had perked only when the lady had chuckled slyly and said, "I wonder what Jay Karst is doing in Mexico City. Young lover, you can be assured that if Jay is here there is also a pot of gold nearby."

Jay Karst had seemed to be a loner, so George Kelly and Arnold Pickering had figured they could handle him: two against one, as it were. They had trailed Jay to Texas, then had been subjected to the bus journey to Miami, and finally to the Cassandra in Miami Beach. By then, of course, they had picked up the fact that Jay Karst was shadowing, too—a beautiful woman and her

friend. But they had no idea why Karst was sniffing.

Then Jay Karst had suffered the heart attack. This had put Kelly and Pickering at a crossroads.

They had been in the lobby and overheard the assistant manager when he called Shayne. They spotted the detective when he arrived and asked for Karst's room. They knew Shayne had spent an hour alone with him in a hotel room.

Then there was the beautiful woman and her lover. Which to tackle? Somebody had to know about the gold—if there was any gold.

They had picked the detective. Same logical thinking as with Karst. The redhead traveled alone, so it again was two against one, a situation most normal, redblooded young men could handle if it were to get down to fisticuffs.

And it had. The only problem being Mike Shayne had turned out to be one tough nut and the two young redbloods had been forced to withdraw—right into the arms of a couple of guys who were very serious about their business, their business being kidnapping.

"I've picked up the whole picture only since we've been here," continued George Kelly, his voice beginning to shrill slightly. "First, Miss Cordoba.

Then Mr. Chambers. And now, you, Mr. Shayne."

George Kelly moved out to the edge of his chair, was nervous. "Man, I wish I was back in Mexico City! Chile? Black market? Nine million bucks? Some nut who wants to be a dictator? Mr. Shayne, can you get us out of this mess?"

Shayne ignored the question. He faced Guy Chambers instead. "You've got troops on the outside, pal, and they've got the lever on Duval they needed: kidnappings, bombings. When are they going to land?"

Chambers slipped a little lower in his chair, almost smiled as he steeped his fingers under his chin. "Rescue mission, you mean."

"Exactly what I mean," Shayne said.

"Could you believe that my people may have missed everything that's happened, may be out there grasping frantically at straws?"

"No."

Chambers nodded. "I think that is exactly what has happened, Mike. Look, the entire CIA force is not in the Miami area. There has been me, my two cohorts. And all of this business of Miss Cordoba, Jay Karst, those two guys in the chairs over there wheeling into the city happened fast. I sent out messages for help, natch,

but the help arrived too late.

"My two people were stopped when Kelly and Pickering were picked up by the Duval people. Sure, they know Kelly and Pickering were brought here, but that isn't going to make them think automatically that Miss Cordoba is here, that you are here, or that I am here."

Chambers shook his head. "Mike, we've got to move from inside. We can't count on my people picking up leads here and there, moving in here. They will, eventually, of course, but that may be too late—depending on what S. Ash Duval has in mind for us."

S. ASH DUVAL had in mind, at that moment, questioning a redheaded Miami private detective. Shayne was summoned by Ralph and Elmer, taken downstairs and into a vast living room. S. Ash Duval sat in a high wing chair, a small man with a very large, very round, very bald head and old-fashioned rimless glasses perched on the end of a short nose. The perch allowed Duval to look out over the top of the glasses, which he did as he sized Shayne.

Then Duval said, "I have pieced the ties of the others upstairs, Mr. Shayne. Do you care to elaborate about yourself?"

"My office was bombed today,

pal. My secretary is in a hospital."

Duval pinched his lower lip in two fingers. "And from that am I to deduce that you think I ordered the bombing?"

"Didn't you?"

"I did not."

"Nor the one at the Casandra?"

S. Ash Duval sighed, touched the rimless glasses. "Mr. Shayne, if ridding the earth of Miss Cordoba was of particular import to me, it would have been done in Santiago long ago—certainly before or during her asinine journey here. Miss Cordoba can be a beautiful butterfly or a common house fly. While a beautiful butterfly, one tolerates her. When she becomes the house fly, one waves her away. Certainly, one does not have to kill her."

"Duval," said Shayne grimly, "why the hell are we all packed in upstairs?"

The small man frowned, took off his glasses, swiped each lens across a sharply-creased pants knee, returned the glasses to his short nose.

"From the day my friend Carlos Merito died for a cause in Santiago, I expected Miss Cordoba to appear in Miami. The man named Jay Karst I learned about from friends in Mexico City. Those other two—George Kelly and Arnold

Pickering—were pointed out to me only yesterday, as were you. Naturally, I have had people at the Cassandra since the arrival of Miss Cordoba, her friend Juan Ribera and Jay Karst.

"Frankly, my people—and I, in turn—were mildly surprised by Mr. Kelly, Mr. Pickering and you. What had appeared to be little more than a nuisance to be tolerated suddenly took on scope by sheer numbers alone. So many people so abruptly interested in me. And then the entry of Mr. Chambers, once an employee of the Central Intelligence Agency. You and Mr. Chambers meeting.

"Can't you see, Mr. Shayne, how this sudden ballooning might call for drastic action? One could lose control of a situation if one were to allow the ballooning to continue. Thus, I requested that you people be collected, and brought here. At least, I am in control again."

"Okay, you're in control, so now what happens?"

Duval frowned, removed his glasses and polished them again. "Unfortunately, a dimension has been added, one over which I do not have control, at least at present. Frankly, this matter came up in the last two hours, was unexpected, and I am not at all

sure what it will mean—to you people. We are all going out to one of the Keys. Immediately."

IX

THE BOAT was a high-powered inboard-outboard plant, large and trim. Mike Shayne and Guy Chambers were together in a small cabin below deck. The cabin contained four bunks. Sitting hunched on one of the bunks, Shayne could see the ladder that went up to a louvered door. A guard was posted outside that door.

Avis Cordoba and the two college graduates were in a forward cabin, a much larger area with a settee, chairs and wall tables. There was a tiny galley off that cabin and Avis had found coffee and an electric pot. She worked methodically. The two amateur adventurers sat tautly on the settee, casting nervous glances everywhere. Shayne had waved Chambers to the small cabin. At least their movements below deck weren't restricted.

"Got any flashes of brilliance, Guy?" the redhead grveled.

Chambers shook his head. He looked worried. "There's a meet of some kind to be held on one of the Keys," he said. "That much we both know. Just who Duval is meeting, where and why we may never discover.



But if we do, we may never see the mainland again, either. We're in deep trouble, Mike."

"There's hundreds of empty keys out here," Shayne nodded. "We could be dropped off on one of them to rot."

"Or we could be shot and pitched overboard."

Shayne's scowl deepened. "I don't think so," he said slowly. "Not with Duval along. At first, I thought it was a possibility. But I don't think our friend wants to be associated with murder, not in person. If he'd sent us out here with some of his goons, it would be a different story."

"Any way you look at it, Mike," Chambers said, "sooner or later, we've got to make a break. Our last chance may be right now. At least, we're not in cuffs or ropes. We get to the meet site and we could be chained to walls."

"Duval's boys are armed as if they are going to war," said Shayne. "I assumed you noticed."

"How many people did you make?"

"Duval and four others from the house. Two crew people."

Chambers nodded. "And how much help you figure we will get out of the two juniors, the college boys?"

"Damn little, maybe none." Shayne grunted.

"Uh-huh." Chambers yanked at his nose. "Know something? I think we're traveling loaded. I think we've got Carlos Merito's treasure aboard. Did you notice the two duffle bags that were brought on? Almost more attention was paid to them than to us. And I see they were kept topside, right where Duval can sit with his feet propped on them."

"I noticed," Shayne nodded. "But why the hell bring along nine million bucks? Is Duval making his break, just packing up nine mill and hauling, leaving everything else behind? That doesn't make sense, Guy. That compound of his is worth plenty of cabbage in itself. And that doesn't take into consideration personal things. The guy has to have some things he wouldn't leave behind, even when he runs off to become a dictator."

Shayne pulled his earlobe. "Guy, maybe Duval is delivering the money to someone. It shatters the picture of the man that was painted for me. I've been told he had aspirations, would use the cache to make his move. But it's beginning to smell as if there is someone higher than S. Ash, a Merito cohort who still lives. S. Ash Duval may be a go-between, no more."

Chambers looked as if he

were a judge pondering a death sentence.

"Could it be Avis Cordoba?" Shayne asked thoughtfully.

Chambers jerked with surprise.

"Figure it this way," Shayne said, warming to his new idea. "She is power. She and Merito were onesies-twosies, a helluva lot more than mere bedmates. She and Merito together were using Duval as their bank. She rolls into Miami, not to collect the spoils as Jay Karst figured, but to confer with Duval.

"Maybe there was to be a gathering of the scattered Marxists, a regrouping. Maybe there was to be a high level conference, like with the Dons when something inside the Mafia goes haywire. Maybe that conference was to take place at Duval's compound. What better place? They are inside walls, out of sight. Nobody has to go out. Everything can be brought in.

"But Avis spots Karst, then me, then the college boys who leaned on me. The sudden popularity is a danger signal, calls for a delay in the conference, immediate action by Avis. She has Duval pick up Kelly and Pickering, she has Juan Ribera attempt to bomb me.

"Then another hitch in her plans. Juan accidentally blows up himself and a maid in a hotel

room. Maybe the guy came to Miami with a suitcase full of bombs. Maybe the guy was playing cutesies with the maid while Avis was out of the room, trying to make an impression or something by showing her how a bomb worked, maybe the maid was the nosey type, found the suitcase, didn't understand the content, was fiddling, the whole thing blew up in her face.

"I don't know, Guy. All I know is, something like that could have sent Avis scrambling for the compound where she and Duval could've matched minds, decided to have me, you, brought in, decided to put Avis in with us to see what she could learn while we all were together in the upstairs sitting room."

Shayne shrugged suddenly. "She got what she could get from us without being too nosey and now we are here where she still is playing cutesies. She could be running this whole damn show, Guy!"

"Wild, Shayne," Guy Chambers mused, his brow furrowed deeply.

"Pal, *someone* has to be the bomber. It wasn't the college boys. They were picked off the street by the Duval people last night. And Duval says it wasn't him. Okay, the guy could be lying through his pearly white

dentures, but if he isn't, who's left as a candidate? I make it Juan Ribera who got caught up in one of his own little explosions."

Chambers attempted to pace the confine of the cabin, found the area to be too small. He slammed a fist against the paneled wall. "Mike, we've got to try a break. You know how to operate a boat?"

Hands on hips, battered face caught in an expression of heavy thought, Shayne stood staring up the ladder at the louvered door. "The way I've got it made, Guy, there are eight players on their team, four on ours. Not too bad odds if you want to figure Duval and Avis Cordoba as bystanders instead of players. That'd make it six-four. *Except* the odds go down again. Fast.

"One, I've got a hunch the college boys aren't starters. I make them as coming off the bench and playing tough if you and I already have the other side on the run. Two, the other side has an arsenal. Three, we're at sea, with no room to move around in."

Shayne shook his head, yanked at his earlobe. "Things are too tight here, Guy. We'll do better on land."

"No!"

Shayne was mildly surprised at the outburst. He gave Guy

Chambers a quick look. Chambers put up a palm as if stopping an onrushing bus. "Look, Mike. Hold it. Figure it this way: We're outnumbered here; what will it be like when we reach land again—if we ever do? There could be an army waiting for us on the key. Or, like I say, maybe we won't see land again. Maybe Duval is going to put along side another boat out here somewhere. We could be transferred, hauled off somewhere to be dumped."

Chambers stopped long enough to take a long breath. "Mike, I hate swimming! We've got to try now!"

"Gentlemen?"

Suddenly Ash Duval's voice came to them from out of nowhere. Shayne jerked, made a quick inventory of the cabin walls. He didn't spot a speaker.

But the voice continued. Duval sounded almost amused. "I wouldn't try it," Duval said. "There would be bloodshed."

Shayne grunted and looked hard at Chambers.

"Bugged!" breathed the CIA agent.

X

BRACED AGAINST a paneled wall, Mike Shayne sat on the floor of the forward cabin, knees high, his large hand wrapped around a mug of black coffee. The hum

of the powerful boat motor was strong, effervesced a sense of speed and strength. The vibration against his back was like that of a vibrator bed.

Chambers stood slouched in the entryway, face muscles jerking in a nervous tic. He looked in deep thought. The two college boys sat side by side on the settee opposite the redhead. They remained worried and nervous. Arnold Pickering already had spilled one mug of coffee.

Shayne shifted his gaze to Avis Cordoba. She sat in a chair at one of the wall tables, knees crossed, face blank. Shayne wondered why she hadn't gone topside. She had to have all she wanted—or was going to get—from them by now.

Shayne's scowl deepened. He had liked his theory about Avis being the power behind this operation, Avis being the decision-maker, Avis, instead of Duval, calling the shots. For one thing, it tagged the bomber. Her boy, Juan.

He stared at her hard. She remained still, profiled, poised, looking off into space without seeing anything.

If he was wrong about Avis Cardoba, the redhead repeated mentally, who the hell was the bomber? Duval had the troops, okay. And surely among those

troops there was one bright young lad who knew how to construct a pipe bomb and use it.

But would Duval resort to a bomb? Logic said no. Bombings were noisy, drew crowds, cops. Kidnappings were quiet. And, obviously, Ash Duval knew how to have people kidnapped.

Shayne sucked a breath, stirred on his haunches. Then the change in pitch of the boat motor alerted all of them. Chambers stood straighter in the entryway, head cocked slightly as he listened hard. The college boys shifted around on the settee in new nervousness, flicked glances from Shayne to Chambers and back to the detective. Avis uncrossed her knees and stood suddenly. She kept her fingertips braced against the flat of the wall table to help preserve her balance.

"I think we have arrived, gentlemen," she finally said softly.

"You got any idea where, doll?" Shayne grunted, getting his feet under him.

"No."

The boat motor had leveled off into a low hum and the boat seemed to have settled slightly. The wall vibration was gone now. They had slowed, almost seemed to be idling. But there was the slight sensation of for-

ward movement. Then there was a solid thump and sudden quiet.

Shayne looked around. Chambers grunted. "Docked."

Avis Cordoba nodded.

"You people below..."

The voice came through the louvered door at the top of the ladder.

"Come on up. Slow. Easy." The voice was cold, ominous.

The night was warm and moonless, but there was light on deck. Shayne made a quick survey. The steering console was at the opposite end of the craft. Two men in sailing caps stood behind the windshield. They seemed to be busy and paid no attention to the deck happenings.

S. Ash Duval stood off to one side, near the two duffle bags. The heavy named Ralph sat on one of the bags, knees high and wide. A rifle lay across his thighs. He kept the rifle in place with his elbows as he sat stroking his mustache with an index finger.

The other heavy, Elmer, was behind Shayne and the detective noticed that Elmer was palming a familiar .45. The redhead's fingertips itched.

"Everybody down to the dock," said Elmer, motioning with the pistol.

Duval's other two heavies stood down there. They had

moved away from the craft and they seemed to be weaponless, but they were waiting and Shayne figured both were armed.

Tied up and dark on the other side of the dock were a long schooner and two—one large, one small—powerful-looking motor boats. The dock jutted from a tiny island that was open in front and circled on three sides with what Shayne figured had to be a thickness of mangrove and wateroak.

Encircled was an open area with lighted steps going up a slight incline from the dock. To the rear of the open area was a wide, two-story house. No light came from the upstairs windows but those on the ground floor were brilliant. Shayne searched the area between the steps and the house for moving shadows, but saw none.

"Roll, Shayne," Elmer said from behind the detective.

Chambers, Avis and the college boys already were on the dock. Shayne went down the ladderway to them, glanced over his shoulder at Elmer. The .45 was out of sight now. Elmer lifted a hand, waved toward the island.

"You're on the only street in town, friend," he said with a chuckle that carried no humor. "Move out."

XI

They went up the steps and onto thick grass. Elmer moved around to their left, keeping plenty of distance. When they were about halfway toward the house, he said, "Okay, move off to your right a few steps, then squat. This is as far as we are going."

The other two heavies went on up to the house, flanked the closed front door. The door remained closed. And then Ash Duval walked across the grass to the house, light from the windows splashing on his small figure.

He opened the door of the house without knocking and entered. The two heavies followed him. The door was closed. Off to Shayne's front, perhaps twenty yards away, Elmer now was a combination of flesh and shadow as he hunkered down. A lighter flared, as Elmer lit a cigarette.

"No bunching up, keep spread out so I can see all of you," he called out. "I don't want nobody running off into the mangrove—not that you'd be going anyplace, but I don't wanna hafta get in there. This place is lousy with mosquitoes and sand flies and gnats. Don't wanna stir 'em."

Shayne had everyone placed: Ralph and the two crewmen on

the boat, Elmer in the yard, Ash Duval and the other two heavies inside the house. He wondered who else was in the house, how many other heavies might be drifting around out there in the mangrove someplace, heavies who were out of sight, but watching.

"Doll," he said, keeping his voice low, "you got any idea what gives here?"

Avis Cordoba shuffled, said nothing for several seconds. Then she offered in a soft tone, "Only if you are interested in speculation, Mr. Shayne."

"Shoot."

"I think we may all find ourselves in Havana soon."

The college boys mumbled, looked at each other. Guy Chambers muttered an oath, moved around in a restless circle.

Avis Cordoba continued, "This could be a hideaway for Mr. Duval. Or it could belong to someone else, a friend of his. Perhaps it might be occupied by the Cubans, but I think that chance is remote. These are U.S. waters. I don't think the Cubans could move in, set up a station here—although you never know what they might try."

Shayne looked at Chambers. "Guy?"

"Not a chance in hell of it being a Cuban station. We'd



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know about it. The Coast Guard would know."

"I'll buy that," nodded Shayne.

"All right," said Avis. "But would your Coast Guard be aware of all the comings and goings here? These people are not stupid, Mr. Chambers. They are experts in subterfuge. The Cubans know how to get people in and out of places. They've had years of exceptional training from the Russians, remember. And the man who oc-

cupies this house does not have to be a Cuban. He can be *anything*—including American. It's his sympathies, his causes, his thinking that are important."

"They dovetail with Duval's thinking," Shayne stated, "or he wouldn't be here."

"Mr. Shayne," Avis Cordoba continued, "I'm not sure that you are—what is the American expression?—*with* what is happening. Mr. Duval has ambitions. And he now has funds, nine million dollars in funds. He is in a position to bargain, perhaps even to establish himself. Chile, for instance, is ripe for a new leader of the people, as you may or may not know.

"And Cuba—Castro—is interested in Chile, has been for years. The Cuban presence—particularly its political presence—has been strong, but has been temporarily uprooted by the junta. And now the Cubans are scrambling. They are desperate. They must become re-established in Chile soon. To keep their image with Russia, of course.

"The Russian government has little tolerance for weakness. Therefore, it is an excellent hour for Mr. Duval to make a move. He offers himself as a reorganizer and nine million dollars as jumping off capital. Nine million dollars can

buy a lot of souls in Chile, Mr. Shayne. It may not get him a dictatorship, but he will be listened to."

"You figure that's what's going on inside that house up there right now, doll? Duval is being listened to?"

"Yes," she nodded simply.

"And do you also think the nine million is aboard the boat down there in the duffle bags?"

"Yes."

"Why would he bring it here?"

"You, Mr. Shayne, me. Mr. Chambers. Mr. Kelly and Mr. Pickering. Mr. Karst. Knowledge of the existence of Carlos Merito's cache suddenly seems to have become rather widespread. I would suspect that all of us have made Mr. Duval a bit nervous. I think he stared up at the dark ceiling and imagined each of us telling someone else—a friend, a cohort—about the money. I think he imagines that the world may be closing in on him. Therefore he finally came around to summoning assistance. He is looking for a bank vault here or he is prepared to take assurances for later individual power in exchange for the turnover of the money now."

"He has to have something different clicking around inside him, doll," Shayne said. "Give most guys I know nine mill

cash and you'd never see 'em again."

"Mr. Duval is different."

"So where do you figure we fit in this unique man's thinking at the moment?"

"As I said, probably in Havana. Can you envision a tiny, earthen-wall cell, Mr. Shayne—say, off in the mountains somewhere? It doesn't make Mr. Duval a murderer. Nor does it make the Cubans murderers. It merely makes them guardians of political prisoners."

"Guy?" Shayne growled.

Chambers was nodding. "I buy the lady's thinking."

Shayne tugged hard at his earlobe for a couple of seconds, glanced off towards Elmer. The heavy remained squatted, continued to smoke. "We have to take him," said Shayne, "and fast, before he gets help out here."

"And then?" said Chambers.

"There's only one way off this island, pal," the redhead said grimly. "And that's the way we came in."

"We overpower the crew and the guard down there, force them to head back for the mainland?"

"That's one way."

"Mr. Shayne?" It was a question.

The detective shot a hard look at George Kelly. Until

now, Kelly had been silent during the entire journey.

"I've had some experience with motor boats," Kelly said. He sounded as if he was admitting he once passed the time of day rifling cigarette machines.

"I think I can handle that one we came out on."

"Good to know," Shayne said. "You just might have to."

Mike Shayne clamped his midsction suddenly, doubled forward with a loud groan and pitched shoulder down into the grass. He rolled so that he could keep an eye on Elmer. He groaned again, faked the twitching of his legs.

"Hey..."

Elmer was on his feet. He moved forward a few yards, then stopped.

"Heart..." moaned Shayne.

"I think he's suffering a heart seizure," Chambers yelled to the heavy.

"Back off!" snapped Elmer. "All of you! Way back! That's it! Now, don't nobody move!"

He approached the writhing redhead cautiously, moving a few steps, stopping, then coming forward again. Shayne kept the groans alive, noticing that Elmer had produced the .45, holding the gun in his right fist.

Elmer snapped erect. "All of you! Move back some more!"

Shayne stiffened all over,

groaned loudly and rolled onto his back, straightening his legs. He allowed his arms and hands to flop and then he sucked a breath and became very still, his head lolling.

From somewhere he heard Guy Chambers breath, "My God, I think he just died!"

Elmer approached Shayne, still cautious. The detective watched the approach through slitted eyes. Elmer finally was in range. Shayne lifted his right leg high, then whipped with it, catching Elmer's knees in the vicious scissoring movement.

Elmer pitched and yelped. The yelp was cut off. Guy Chambers had moved with the speed of a striking snake. A forearm across Elmer's throat, the other behind the heavy's head, Guy Chambers snapped the man's head down. Elmer gagged, suddenly went slack. The .45 dropped easily from his hand.

Chambers rolled Elmer aside, and went for the gun. But Shayne already had a hand on the .45. The redhead went up on his knees, hefted the weapon. Chambers was in a half crouch before him, light from the house on his face. The face mirrored brutal determination. Chambers made a slight reaching movement.

Shayne lifted the gun out of

his range. "I've got it, Guy," he said.

Chambers remained cocked for just an instant, then seemed to shake himself down. He straightened. "Okay, Mike, let's roll."

XII

THEY MOVED off into the shadow of the mangrove, Avis Cordoba and the college boys trailing. Shayne picked a heavy shadow and stopped. They were out of the light from the house now. Chambers moved up beside Shayne. He was breathing heavily. Shayne shot him a glance.

Chambers had displayed a quickness and savageness that had surprised the detective. Shayne was sure Chambers had snapped Elmer's neck, killed the heavy swiftly. It was as if the act had been reflexive.

Shayne went forward on his hands and knees, the .45 clamped in his fist. He peered around the curve of mangrove and out along the dock. No one was in sight on the dock or the boat. Elmer's short yelp apparently had not been heard.

Shayne remained hunched. "There's only one way to go aboard, Guy," he said quietly. "I doubt if we can sneak on, and we sure as hell won't lure them off."

He looked over his shoulder at the crouched Avis Cordoba and the college boys. "We have to rush the boat together," he said, still in a low tone. "If anyone sticks here, he's going to be trapped for sure. The first shot will bring people from the house. It's chancy, but it's the only way."

No one said a word.

"Okay, let's shoes off. Leave them here. We'll get as far as we can without being seen or heard. Every step increases our chance for escape. No one down there is hanging on a railing. Chances are, those on board figure things up here are in control. Surprise may give us a slight edge. Anybody for sticking here?"

Arnie Pickering opened his mouth, then clamped his jaws without speaking. George Kelly said, "Let's go...before I chicken."

Avis Cordoba already had removed her shoes.

They stood barefooted and bunched in the shadow of the mangrove. Shayne glanced up at the house. Everything looked normal and quiet up there. He could not find movement. He looked around the edge of mangrove and down the dock again. The dock was clear and the boat looked unoccupied. He grunted.

"All right, I'll lead," he whis-

pered. "No talking, no yelling. We move fast. Ready?"

The others nodded as if on a single puppet string.

They moved down the grassy incline and onto the dock in a tight cluster. Shayne was out front, the .45 cocked and ready. They were out in the open now with approximately twenty yards of dock to cover before reaching the ladderway. They moved swiftly.

Shayne kept a sharp eye on the boat railing. He had the strange sensation they were being watched, lured by a confident sharpshooter. His mind played tricks. He couldn't rid himself of the notion that Ralph was in the prone position on the deck of the boat, smiling. In his mind's eye he saw Ralph sighting and he felt as if a rifle was trained on his chest.

When was the explosion to come?

A sixth sense warned him an instant before he saw the figure of a man appear at the boat railing. The man had a dark body and was dressed in a white T-shirt and dungarees and a sailing cap. The man jerked, seemed to become frozen in surprise.

Aiming for a white-clad shoulder, Shayne triggered a shot from the .45 and broke into a run. He was conscious of the crewman's yell. And then the

crewman half turned away from them before suddenly sagging. The crewman flipped over the railing, somersaulted once and landed pitching forward on the dock. His head came up, but Shayne leaped over him. He knew the man was out of action.

Shayne curved into the ladderway, then plunged forward on his knees. The plunge kept him alive. Ralph had appeared suddenly at the top of the ladderway and had triggered a rifle shot. Shayne heard the bullet zing over his head as he brought the .45 up and squeezed the trigger.

Ralph went up on his toes, the rifle went up into the air, and then Ralph's face seemed to explode and the man disappeared.

Shayne twisted on his knees, wondering if any of his crew had been hit. Avis Cordoba was in a half crouch on the dock, the college boys were flat on their faces and Guy Chambers seemed oblivious to everything except the boat crewman at his feet. Shayne saw Chambers slash a savage karate chop against the crewman's neck. The crewman went limp immediately.

Shayne scrambled on up the ladderway, conscious now, of shouting that came from the island. He didn't have to look to

know that fresh trouble was descending on them. But on deck he became rooted in an instant of surprise.

Ralph was flat on his back on the deck, very dead. And beyond him the other crewman stood hunched and frightened, his hands lifted in surrender.

Guy Chambers bounded on board. Avis Cordoba sprawled from the ladderway and pitched across the dead Ralph. George Kelly leaped high in the air from the ladderway to the deck and Arnie Pickering started to follow. But the shot from the island caught Arnie Pickering in flight and spun him off course. He seemed to hang for a few seconds over the railing of the ladderway, the side of his head open and gushing red. And then he disappeared. An instant later there was a splash as his body hit the water between the boat and the dock.

Shayne pitched to the boat railing and fired two wild shots toward the island. Moving shadows split, disappeared. Shayne whirled on his knee. The other crewman was running down the deck. He went over the railing in a high dive, and for just an instant Shayne had the flying man in the sight of the .45. But he did not trigger a shot. The guy was out of their way. It was enough.

Shayne twisted and saw Guy

Chambers flip Avis Cordoba from the dead Ralph and then roll Ralph down the ladderway. Chambers worked frantically with the ladder. It was as if he was attempting to bring it aboard or free it from the boat.

Shayne looked inland, saw a crouched figure moving in a zig-zag running movement toward them along the dock. The figure was hunched and moving fast. Shayne triggered a shot into the running man's leg. The man sprawled with a howl and writhed.

Chambers suddenly was beside Shayne and wheezing. He had the rifle in hand. "I can't get that damn ladder free!" he bellowed.

Shayne heard the cough of the boat motor and whirled on his knee again. George Kelly was behind the windshield at the opposite end of the boat and working frantically. Shayne fired another shot from the .45 toward the island without even looking.

And then he heard Guy Chambers breathe softly, "Ahhh."

Chambers was on his knees, rifle barrel against the boat railing. He was sighting calmly. Shayne glanced and saw the shadow running out onto the dock. The size and the movement of the shadow left no doubt. The shadow was S. Ash

Duval. He was yelling, waving his arms frantically.

Chambers triggered a shot that sent Duval into an odd little dance along the dock edge. Duval stopped suddenly, seemed to balance for a moment. Then he pitched into the water. Shayne knew that S. Ash Duval was dead before he got wet.

XIII

THE BOAT MOTOR was at high pitch now and there was the sensation of straining. Mike Shayne heard a loud cracking somewhere below them on the dock, and then they were free and moving back into deep water. Shayne glanced over the side, saw the dangling ladderway. A bullet made a hissing sound near his ear and he went face down onto the deck. Chambers already was there.

And Chambers was grinning! "Made it," his voice was exultant.

Shayne turned his look down the length of the deck to the steering console. George Kelly still was making frantic movements. He did not seem to be an excellent boatsman, but he had to be doing something right because Shayne abruptly realized they had stopped backing and now were moving forward in a long, sweeping turn.

Shayne risked a look over the side. He saw running lights on one of the boats at the dock come alive. "They're coming after us!" he yelled.

Guy Chambers got up on his knees at the railing and fired two rifle shots at the lights. The lights did not move away from the dock.

"Cooled 'em for a few seconds!" he yelled against the wind.

Shayne looked back along the deck again at Avis Cordoba. She hadn't stirred. He figured she should be moving by now. Unless she was frozen in fright. He crawled to her and discovered that she wasn't frightened or frozen. She was dead.

He touched her chin. Her head moved as if unattached. Her neck had been snapped.

Shayne scowled back over his shoulder at Guy Chambers. "What gives, Guy?"

"Huh?"

"She's dead," Shayne said flatly.

"Slug?"

"Broken neck."

Chambers shrugged. "I saw her fall. I thought she pitched kind of funny-like. But I didn't figure she snapped anything. Hey, do you think this Kelly knows what he's doing? It seems to me we're kind of bouncing all over the ocean."

Shayne stood. His scowl re-

mained as he glanced again toward the steering console. Kelly seemed to have settled. He stood back there, straight and unmoving. But Shayne had the feeling that they were running at top speed and erratically. He had the notion that there could be another Key out there in the darkness, dead ahead, and Kelly wouldn't veer the boat an inch now that he had them moving forward.

Stepping over the dead Avis Cordoba, he pitched back to the steering console, moved in beside the young man. "You got any idea where we're heading?" he yelled against the wind.

Kelly nodded jerkily. "West-Northwest, that's all I know. We have to go that way to hit the mainland."

Shayne threw a look over his shoulder. He did not find running lights behind them. "Ease her down," he shouted.

Kelly flinched, looked at him.

"Nobody on our tail," the redhead mouthed, pointing behind them.

Kelly took a hurried look, reached out and eased back a throttle, and the motor of the boat lost its high-pitched hum. The boat seemed to settle slightly.

Shayne nodded, patted Kelly's shoulder. "Just take it easy, huh? We'll find Florida somewhere."

He started to leave the console and George Kelly said, "Mr. . . Shayne, what's wrong with Miss Cordoba? Why isn't she . . . getting up?"

"She's dead."

The young man gulped hard. "And Arnie, too?"

"I don't think he knew what hit him." Shayne started to move out again, then added, "You know, for a couple of tough guys who like to use a sap you two—"

"I wish we'd never heard of Jay Karst," George Kelly said quickly.

Shayne went forward, scowling anew as he looked at Avis Cordoba. He stopped, searched the deck with his eyes, spotted a tarp. He went to the tarp. It was some kind of discarded cover. He pulled it back to the woman and covered her.

His mind raced. She shouldn't be dead. He hadn't actually seen her fall, but it would take a helluva crazy plunge to snap a neck. He shook his head, continued forward to find Guy Chambers sitting on one of the duffle bags, staring at the other bag. Chambers held the rifle butt down between his knees against the deck, muzzle skyward. He didn't stir as Shayne moved in beside him, but he said, "I'm afraid to look, Mike."

"At what?"

Chambers grunted, nodded. "I still can't look. That kid back there know what he's doing?"

"Enough."

"That's what I figured—but do you think he can get us docked someplace other than Miami?"

Shayne frowned.

"Mike," Chambers went on quickly, "those people out there on that island aren't isolated. They must have a radio inside the house, and Duval has to have left *someone* at the compound. We could have a greeting party."

"You've got a point, Guy," Shayne agreed, nodding. And then he added, "But we must have a radio aboard too. Maybe we can raise the Coast Guard, get an escort."

"No good, Mike," Chambers said, shaking his head. His face suddenly was long. He seemed in deep thought.

"We're sitting on nine million bucks in black market money," he said finally. "Chilean black market money. And Uncle Sam will want no part of that kind of green. Uncle Sam already is in trouble in Chile, most of the other South American countries. Uncle wants all of this kept quiet, very quiet, not even a whisper anywhere. And you know what the Coast Guard will do. They board us, find the money. . . ."

Chambers cut off the words, shook his head again. "God, if just one newspaper, one TV station is monitoring Coast Guard calls, we've had it!"

Shayne didn't follow Chambers' thinking. The CIA moved in mysterious ways sometimes, sure, but there were times when they worked hand in glove with other agencies: Army, Navy, Coast Guard, FBI.

Shayne stared hard at Guy Chambers. Chambers had moved the rifle slightly. He had drawn the butt back and lowered the muzzle, and the detective now found himself almost looking directly down the rifle barrel. The move may have been one of carelessness. On the other hand, Shayne had the distinct feeling he could be looking death straight in its ugly eye.

"Guy?" he said carefully, bringing the .45 up. He kept his move casual.

"Mike?"

Guy Chambers cocked an eyebrow, looked and sounded as if he were totally at ease, had taken command of a situation after most of the dirty work had been done.

XIV

MIKE SHAYNE reached out with the .45 and gently nudged the rifle barrel aside.

Chambers jerked, then grinned broadly as he again pointed the rifle muzzle skyward. "Oops. Sorry, Mike. Didn't realize I was being careless. Got carried away with my thinking."

Shayne grunted, said nothing.

Chambers stood, went forward to the railing, stared out into the darkness. Shayne moved up beside him, faced the wind. Far out in front of them the sky held a light glow, a pale arch against the night.

Chambers said, "Kelly is doing okay. I figure that's Miami Beach dead ahead. But I want him to swing north, Mike. I'm serious about keeping all of this at low-key. No Coast Guard. No nobody. Just you and me and Kelly. As soon as we hit land, I'll make a couple of contacts, find out what to do with the cash. Chile and the U.S.—that's a damned sensitive area these days."

"Uh-huh," Shayne said from deep thought, only half listening to his friend.

"Something has to be done about Kelly, too," Chambers said somberly.

Shayne was instantly alert. "What does that mean?"

"Look, Mike," Chambers said, lifting a palm. "You I trust. You can keep your mouth shut. But Kelly? Who knows? The

guy might keep his yap shut for a couple of weeks, then start feeling his oats. He could get careless with his conversations. Some newspaper guy could pick up a smell, start digging. That'd make Uncle sore as a boil."

"And you suggest?"

"I don't know," Chambers said slowly. Then he straightened suddenly, seemed to cast the Kelly problem aside. "The first thing we have to do is find a place to dock."

"Hell, let's hit one of the private boat clubs. We'll be in to the dock before the attendants realize we're not supposed to be there."

"I'd prefer a little more privacy, but a club may have to be it," Chambers agreed.

Miami Beach lights ahead were much brighter now, taking on individuality. Shayne went back to Kelly. "Ease her down, George, and take the first dock you spot."

They cruised into a long finger sticking out into the water. Kelly found a slot and displayed some expertness in placing the boat. But the dangling ladderway kept them about three feet out from the dock. Shayne and Chambers stood side by side, looking over the side.

Then suddenly Chambers brought the rifle muzzle down

and nicked Shayne's nose. "Okay, Mike," he growled, "sorry about all of this."

"I had a suspicion, - Guy," Shayne said heavily. "You and the money. You've been killing a helluva lot of people unnecessarily in the last hour and a half. And before that you planted a couple of bombs."

"I wasn't trying to kill you, Mike. Just make you angry enough to get into this thing. I needed you."

"You damn near killed Lucy, pal."

"My wife was killed by a bomb," he nodded. "I know how you feel. Uncle Sam owes me, Mike, he's owed for a long time. With nine million bucks a man can get lost. There still are corners of the world."

Shayne saw movement out of the corner of his eye. It startled him. He flicked a look, saw George Kelly leaping down to the dock. Kelly hit on his feet with a yell, rolled.

The move triggered Chambers. He whipped the butt of the rifle into Shayne's middle, then brought the muzzle down quickly and fired a shot toward the dock as Shayne staggered and gagged.

The detective shook his head, brought the .45 up. But the gun continued on up into the sky as Chambers again brought the rifle butt up in a sweeping

movement, crashing it against Shayne's wrist, and driving pain streaks down his arm.

The rest was instinctive. He had lost the gun. He had no idea where. He shot a first into Guy Chambers' face, realized that Chambers was reeling away from him, then he grabbed the railing in both hands and vaulted over the side. He landed on the dock heavily and rolled, waiting for the rifle shot to open his skull.

The shot did not come.

Shayne became conscious of the revving up of the boat motor, and sudden movement. From his sprawled position on the dock, he saw the boat sliding back out into deeper water. He rolled up to his knees, stared.

Down the dock, George Kelly yelled.

Shayne stared at Kelly, surprise rooting him. Kelly was on his knees too. And he had the .45 in his hand. He was waving the gun wildly as Chambers put the boat into a turn.

Suddenly Kelly began shooting the .45.

The boat continued to make its swing, finally was headed out into Biscayne again. The running lights lost size.

Shayne ran to Kelly, snatched the gun from his hand. But it was too late. Chambers and the boat were too far out now. The .45 never would carry.

Kelly sagged and gasped, "I guess I didn't hit him."

Shayne saw the brief flash of fire aboard the boat. Then the fire blinked out. He grunted, but the grunt was lost in the abrupt explosion and ball of fire that leaped into the black sky. The ball was round for an instant then split like atoms. And abruptly there was darkness, and an eerie stillness.

The boat, Guy Chambers, nine million dollars was gone. It was as if Jay Karst had had his final wish. A black market cache had been Deep-Sixed.

"George," Mike Shayne said, "you hit *something*."

Next Month:

THE DREXYLL PLOY

A New Exciting Novelet

by ROBERT ALAN BLAIR

A Matter of Life and Death

by BILL PRONZINI

and

BARRY MALZBURG

The answer meant more to some one else, but he had to have it before he could act . . .

LETTER FROM *Herman Skolnick* to the Committee for the Divine, Bay City, California:

I have perruzed your recent advertisement in *Astounding Spirits* with great interest. It is absolutely vital that I know the



answer to the following question: is there a Life After Death? Please reply by return mail (my address is % General Delivery, Bay City).

P.S. I am quite serious. I must know the answer to this question immediately.

Letter from the Committee for the Divine to Herman Skolnick:

You will find the answer to your question, and many others, in our Course on Celestial Metaphysics, brochures on which are being released to you in conjunction with this letter. Payment of the full enrollment fee is due upon your signing up for the course, but there will be no further charges of any sort.

Letter from Herman Skolnick to the Committee for the Divine:

I do not think you understand the seriousness of my intent, or the necessity of my need for the answer to my question. I am desperate and I have neither the time nor the funds to enroll in your Course. I beg you to answer: is there a Life After Death?

Letter from the Committee for the Divine to Herman Skolnick:

As a result of certain laws of publications and information, regulating our use of the mails for our services, we are unable to reply to your question, the

answer to which, as was stated in previous correspondence, will be found in our course on Celestial Metaphysics. We will allow a ten percent (10%) reduction in the price of the Course for immediate enrollment and will guarantee to refund your money promptly if you are not satisfied with the results.

Letter from Herman Skolnick to Elsa Wiggins, The Helping Hand Mission, Bay City, California:

I have heard many good things about the work you've been doing, and am writing to you because I urgently need your help. Please tell me (% General Delivery, Bay City): is there a Life After Death?

Letter from Elsa Wiggins to Herman Skolnick:

Thank you, brother, for your expression of faith in the community service which we at The Helping Hand Mission are so unselfishly performing in offering Hope for the lost, the intemperate, and the mis-directed among us. From your letter, we know that you too are one of those lost souls—but we cannot begin to offer you the proper guidance through correspondence. Won't you come in and see us?

(Our free lunch is served

every day at noon; dinner at six p.m. Soup and coffee available at all hours. Liquor and tobacco prohibited. Donations always welcome, large or small.)

Letter from Herman Skolnick to Miss Dorinda, % the Miss Dorinda Answers column, Bay City Express, Bay City, California:

I am desperate to know the answer to this question: is there a Life After Death? No one seems willing to help me. Please, please, won't you tell me the answer (my address is % General Delivery, Bay City).

Letter from Miss Dorinda to Herman Skolnick:

I detected a genuine note of soulful desperation in your recent letter, Mr. Skolnick, and so I'm rushing this reply to you right away (we do have to be careful, you know, since many misguided individuals seem to take great pleasure in playing cruel and heartless practical jokes on selfless servants of the human condition such as myself).

The question of whether or not there is Life After Death is one which has bothered every profound person at one time or another during the course of his life. But to some questions, Mr. Skolnick, there are simply no answers. Can it be you seek



guidance in this matter because of some crushing personal crisis? Such as a storm on the bittersweet sea of matrimony? If so, perhaps my new book, *Miss Dorinda Answers: Crises in Marriage*, which was recently published by Nabob Press at \$6.95, might contain valuable insights.

I cannot help you otherwise, Mr. Skolnick, unless you confide in me the reasons for your desperate need to know if there is a Life After Death. But I do want to help you, very much,

and if you will write to me again, outlining the nature of your personal crisis, I will do everything in my power to re-establish emotional harmony in your life.

Letter from Herman Skolnick to Doctor Franklin Powers, % The Magazine of Psychic Phenomenon, New York City:

I have peruzzed your recent column in *The Magazine of Psychic Phenomenon*, in which you offered to respond to any questions from readers on topics of profound significance. I have such a question, Doctor, and I must have the answer as soon as possible. My address is % General Delivery, Bay City, California, and I assure you that I am asking your help with all the earnestness I possess. Help me! I am desperate!

Is there a Life After Death?

Letter from Doctor Franklin Powers to Herman Skolnick:

Thank you for your recent inquiry, Mr. Skolnick.

Ordinarily, I would not undertake to set forth such an opinion as you request; however, I do have definite feelings on the subject, being, if I may modestly say so, an eminently qualified authority on spiritual matters through my close association with Madame Zelda and other recognized mediums.

Simply stated, my opinion then is thus: yes, Mr. Skolnick, there is a Life After Death—although even my dear departed aunt, with whom I have had several illuminating conversations through Madame Zelda, is unable to tell me its exact nature.

I hope you will find this response to be of some use, and I would like to hear from you again should you feel inclined. Just why do you wish so desperately to know if there is a Life After Death?

Suicide note found near the body of Herman Skolnick:

I have feared for my sanity for some time now, and cannot face the prospect of another tomorrow. I would have drunk the ratsbane preparation long ago if I had not been disturbed about the question of Life After Death. I have now obtained sufficient proof, however, that there is a Life After Death and thus the final obstacle to the taking of my own life has been removed. I am sorry for all the trouble and inconvenience my death will cause my fiancée, my acquaintances, and of course the police, but I must selfishly think of myself at this moment. I simply cannot go on any longer.

Statement of the Foreman of the Jury at the Coroner's Inquest

into the death of Herman Skolnick:

In view of the statements of investigating officers and of the strange nature of the correspondence found in the deceased's possession, we the jury of this inquest are of uniform agreement that Herman Skolnick was mentally disturbed and died by his own hand.

Letter from Robert Claverly to Miss Francine Allard, Bay City:

I realize this is a poor time to attempt to re-establish our once

deeply-meaningful relationship, Francie, but you know how I feel about you. I'll be here and waiting whenever you need me. Perhaps, once time has begun to heal your grief and shock at the death of your fiancé, Herman Skolnick, and you have had the opportunity to carefully peruse our relationship in your mind, you will realize that I am and always have been the only man who could ever make you truly happy, and that I stand ready to do anything—anything at all—so that we might always be together. . .

In the Next Issue—

THE MURDER OF A GHOST

A Chilling New Mike Shayne Complete Short Novel

by BRETT HALLIDAY

There were thirteen at the table, all gathered there to take part in the seance. Mike Shayne, Tim Rourke and Lucy Hamilton had brought all their skepticism along—but it was to prove no guard against the deadly consequences when Madame Yolande called for a departed spirit and found a corpse in its place; the very rich and very eccentric corpse of a man who should have died more than six years earlier. The medium had more surprises in store; when the lights went on, she disappeared, and no one could find her!

FRANK COSTELLO: Minister of the Underworld

Another TRUE CRIME STORY Masterpiece

by DAVID MAZROFF



FRANCESCO Castiglia was a very bright young man, perceptive, far above average intelligence. Born in a small Sicilian village—which even the Black Hand ignored as too poor for their robbery and extortion activity—his poverty frustrated him. Tales of the wonders of America intrigued him. That was the place for him.

The story may be apocryphal or may be true that he robbed a passing merchant of several thousand lira and bought passage to New York under an assumed name. By whatever

means, he arrived in New York shortly after his eighteenth birthday and took the name of Frank Costello.

A young man unable to speak the language, with no friends, acquaintances, or relatives, his arrival was an event that ushered in the red dawn of crime in New York. From the very outset, things broke right for Costello and wrong for decent society and law and order.

It was the eve of Prohibition, with its consequent outbreak of gangland struggles.

There was the usual violence

He dealt with criminals all his life, from the dread "Black Hand" in his native Italy to the sleaziest of killers in his adopted homeland, the U.S., and yet he never dirtied his hands with such small things as murder. He used his near-genius mentality to organize the greatest criminal syndicate the United States had ever seen — and it took the Congress to unravel the devious threads which led to the "Brains of Gangland."



among the crime bosses in New York at the time. Joe "The Boss" Masseria was in a death-struggle with Salvatore Maranzano for control of the rackets. Up in Harlem there was Ignazio "Lupo the Wolf" Lupo who also harbored ambitions for supremacy, total control of all the rackets in New York City and its boroughs.

The wild gunfights in the streets in which innocent men and women were wounded or killed had its effect on Costello. Among the three hoods, Maranzano, Masseria and Lupo, there existed at the time the most despotic and powerful moguls of organized violence and crime in New York's history. Their arrogance was beyond words.

Costello moved into a room on the lower East Side in the Italian section around Mulberry Street. There, fate played a hand in his life. He met a young hoodlum named Charles Luciano *nee* Salvator Lucania.

They became fast friends.

Both were about the same age, and both had the same ambitions; to make a lot of money and live in luxury. Both, too, had no compunctions about anything, and that included murder. However, where Luciano was willing to commit murder personally, Costello was not. If that is a point in

Costello's favor it is no more than giving the devil his due.

Physically, Costello, even as a youth, was not what could be called handsome. He was above average height, with straight dark hair, a high, broad forehead, thin mouth, and a nose that was a little too long for the rest of his features.

His eyes told the story of the man. They were dark and what went on behind them, no one could say. He was thrifty with words, among those he knew only slightly, and was hard to know intimately. He was the perfect underworld character.

As he grew to prominence in the underworld he had only three intimate friends, Lucky Luciano, Joe Adonis, and Frank Erickson, with whom he became a partner in booking large amounts of bets other bookmakers couldn't handle. Even Dandy Phil Kastel of New Orleans, who was Costello's partner in the slot machine business there, was not an intimate.

Luciano saw in Costello many things that Costello at the time didn't see in himself. Costello's calculator mind could figure odds on two or three different horses at the same time, or on the percentages of dice, roulette, *chemin de fer*, or other gambling games with an amazing rapidity. Only one other

man in the underworld possessed that kind of mind. That was Abbadda Berman who worked for Dutch Schultz in figuring out the winning numbers on policy or the numbers game.

Luciano introduced Costello to craps. He spent one hour with him explaining the game. That was all that Costello needed. His grasp of the game was phenomenal. Shortly thereafter, Luciano took Costello to a crap game in an apartment. There were the usual young hoods in the game, an assortment of thieves, package snatchers, muggers, burglars.

Costello watched the dice for about ten minutes before making a bet. The dice were wrong, which means that points were missed more often than were made. He bet against the shooter. It took about three hours before Costello and Luciano broke the game.

Costello told himself that gambling was his bag. However, he had a long way to go. First, he must master the language. All he knew now were a few words like "No maka da point. You no win." If he wanted to make a certain bet and didn't know the words for it he would speak in Italian to Luciano and Luciano would translate it to the shooter.



FRANK COSTELLO

Costello studied diligently seven days a week and as many nights. In six months he had acquired enough knowledge of the language to get by but still he studied. In two years time he had fortified himself with a vocabulary sufficient to be understood by anyone.

At that time there were no tote boards on most of the tracks. Independent bookies took all bets and each bookmaker had his own odds on each race and on each respective horse in that race. Costello's agile mind canvassed each bookmaker at a track and when he could he hedged his bets so that there was no way

he could lose and every way he could win.

During the two years in which he studied the language and the various forms of gambling, he advanced personally by making some very sound contacts with many of the top hoods, all young men like himself, all of them ambitious to rise to the top.

Among them were Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel and Meyer Lansky who headed the Bug and Meyer Mob; Ciro Terranova, the Artichoke King; Waxey Gordon, one of the top dealers in narcotics; Arnold Rothstein, the mystery man of Broadway who dealt in everything and anything; Charlie "King" Solomon, Boston gambler and gang leader; and many others.

His contacts kept him abreast of the changing scene in crime. This period saw the advent of Prohibition. A nation thirsty for what had once been legal and as much a heritage as human liberty held the Eighteenth Amendment in contempt. Even the men who had caused its passage now broke the law and bought bootleg wines, liquors, and beer.

The biggest of the illicit dealers in whisky was Waxey Gordon. Gordon couldn't hope to hold that position for long. He was competing with the

gangs of Joe "The Boss" Masseria, Salvatore Maranzano, Dutch Schultz in the Bronx, and Lupo the Wolf in Harlem, among others. Gordon, who was Jewish, didn't have the gang strength to buck the total array of the other gang leaders. He was forced to give way. A meeting was held in Masseria's Central Park West apartment.

JOE THE BOSS was wily. He was from the old school, one of the Mustache Petes along with some fifty others across the country. He gathered around him many young hoods whom he made lieutenants.

Among these were Luciano, who had the distinction of being Masseria's righthand man, Vito Genovese, Albert Anastasia, Frankie Yale, and Frank Costello. Each of these men were to become, individually and separately, the most powerful Mafia bosses in the country.

The meeting in Masseria's apartment was a sort of combination house-warming, a gala for his lieutenants, and a war council to plan ways and means to stop Maranzano. Peace among the gangs was the theme. It was a meeting that had been held many times before by mobsters in other cities—in Atlantic City, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, St.

Louis, Dallas, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles. Everyone agreed that it was better to have peace than war. No one would violate the terms of agreement. Each mob would stay in its own territory and each mob would work together when necessary for the good of all.

Nations have held these same kind of summit meetings and broken their word. So it was with Masseria, Maranzano, Johnson, and the others who attended. It was Costello told Masseria he thought the conclave was a bust.

"You don't expect Maranzano keep his word, do you, Giuseppe?"

Masseria laughed loudly. "Of course not. And he doesn't expect me to keep mine."

"You don't expect to keep your word?" Costello asked. "Then why was the meeting held?"

"Ah, my boy, you are young and impressionable. And you are not born to the law of the vendetta. That is the difference. All that you heard in Atlantic City was—" He paused and snapped his fingers, looked toward Luciano. "Salvatore, what is the American word I want, eh?"

"Crap! It was all crap."

"Crap! That is the word. Nothing but crap. We play for time. We wait. We watch. At

the right time, poof! Good bye to this bum Maranzano!"

"But he is waiting and watching too, yes?" Costello said.

"Oh, of course. But he does not have the lieutenants like mine, eh, Francesco? And the soldiers. That is the difference."

"He has many good men, Giuseppe. Many good men."

"True, true, as you say, but my men are better. That is the difference. Look around. Maranzano has such men as these?" He pointed to Genovese, Anastasia, Yale, and to Luciano. "No, my boy, Maranzano the bum does not have men like those. Nor like you. You are very smart, yes, very smart. You will go far."

Costello by this time had become sophisticated in manner and dress. He refused the flamboyancy some of the other hoods adopted; the flashy clothes, flashy broads, the habit of carrying around large sums of money, most of it in hundred-dollar notes.

He lived now in a five room apartment on West End Avenue around 76th Street, a quiet neighborhood inhabited by business and professional people, legitimate professions and businesses.

He traveled by taxi, ate in out of the way restaurants, and stayed away from the night

clubs. It was years before the police department of New York City knew he was alive, and by then he had become one of the most important men in the criminal syndicate.

Costello didn't entirely trust Masseria. He had learned a great deal about him, and the philosophy of the vendetta that Masseria had mentioned hadn't escaped him either.

There was the occasion of the feud between Masseria and Umberto Valenti who had tried to kill him. Four of Valenti's torpedoes surrounded Masseria one afternoon and pegged a score of shots at him. All they hit was his new straw hat as Masseria dodged and ran until he gained the safety of his home.

Masseria waited a reasonable period, then decided on the time-worn Sicilian tactic, lulling the senses of his intended victim by pleas of peace and friendship. Valenti bought it. There was to be a meeting between the two of them and each was to bring but one other man along, an emissary. Masseria left the choice of the place where they were to meet to Valenti who chose a small restaurant run by an Italian couple on East Twelfth Street near Second Avenue.

It was a warm August 11th in 1922. The four men ate and

drank and shook each other's hand and vowed an everlasting peace. The meeting over, Valenti and his emissary stepped out into the street. When he had reached Second Avenue two gunmen blazed away at him and his emissary. Both were killed.

Where was Joe The Boss? In the restaurant, of course. He had a perfect alibi because there were about a dozen diners there who would swear he had been there when the shooting took place. Ironically enough, Masseria should have remembered this ploy, because that was exactly the tactic by which he was lured to his death some years later.

There were other stories about Masseria that told Costello he was a dangerous and treacherous ally on whom it would be foolhardy to turn your back. However, there was the money. The deal with Waxey Gordon on liquor offered profits far beyond Costello's dreams at the time. Later, of course, his take from the illicit booze was peanuts when he reflected on it as he handled huge sums from his many gambling enterprises.

Masseria now decided to lull Maranzano into believing that he had retired from active participation in his rackets. He turned over the supervision to Luciano who spread the word

that he was now in charge. Accordingly, he made Costello his lieutenant, assigning to him all the gambling—bookie joints, the several gambling houses, and the layoff betting.

It was at this time that Costello met Frank Erickson and Arnold Rothstein. Both liked the quiet young man who made such a pleasant appearance but was smart, clever, and adroit in all phases of the gambling racket. Erickson and Rothstein tried to steer Costello away from Masseria and Luciano but Costello refused.

"I owe Charlie a great deal. He trusts me. I couldn't leave him. I'm not built that way."

His decision made an even greater impression on both men, more so on Erickson than on Rothstein. Essentially, Rothstein was a lone wolf with no intimates because he didn't trust anyone. That, in part, may have been the secret of his success. It was also the reason why he was killed eventually.

However, both Rothstein and Erickson were to play important roles in Costello's climb to the top. His association with them brought him into contact with many of the kingpin gamblers as well as high police officers and politicians who, Costello learned, were on the take.

Costello and Luciano held a



meeting in Luciano's apartment to discuss the feud between Masseria and Maranzano. They spoke in Italian to each other, the language in which both could express themselves more eloquently.

"This whole business between Masseria and Maranzano doesn't make a bit of sense to me," Costello said. "It is bad for business. The whole thing is complicated enough as it is without having to play hide and seek with a lot of gunmen who want to kill you."

"I agree," Luciano replied. "It is a bad mess. What are you

doing about Joe Doto? He's a good man."

"I know. I'm cutting him in for pieces here and there. I like him. He's got brains and guts and does what he's told."

"True. He belongs with us. Frank, we're going to take over. Masseria has to go. He's too violent and thinks the only way to settle things is with the gun. When he goes I want good people with us. People like Joe Doto, Anastasia, Benjamin Siegel, Meyer Lansky, and those two guys on the East Side, Louis Buchalter and Jake Shapiro."

"Those four, Siegel, Lansky, Buchalter and Shapiro, they are Jewish, yes?"

"Yes. So is Waxey Gordon. They are going to be big. Gordon is big already. He controls most of the narcotic traffic in town, and has the connections for the liquor from the Islands, Bimini, Nassau, Freeport, and the other places down there including Havana. We need him. We'll need the other four too. If the town is taken over only by Italians and Sicilians it will put us on the spot because all the heat will be directed toward us. With some of the Jewish boys in on it, and the Irish—well, you get my point?"

"Sure, Charlie. What about Genovese?"

"Very ambitious man. Hard

to control. He wants to be boss. If not the big boss then second, with his own mob." Luciano was silent for a while. Then, "Nothing to worry about, however. He'll have his own territory and stay there."

Costello shook his head. "I don't know about that, Charlie. I've seen the way he operates. He's hard, tough, and he kills quick. A very dangerous man."

"I'll handle him, Frank. Meanwhile, he's good for us. We need him. We need most of the guys operating in town, even Dutch Schultz and Legs Diamond. They are dogs but I'd rather keep the peace than have to fight them. That's what we're talking about right now, the uselessness of the killings that's bringing on heat. In time, things will work themselves out, one way or another. You see, Frank?"

COSTELLO saw all too well. He knew what Luciano was thinking and planning—the elimination of Joe "The Boss" Masseria, which then would bring about peace among the gangs. With Masseria dead, Luciano would take over. There was no doubt in Costello's mind that Luciano was one of the sharpest minds in all the underworld.

With a short prison term behind him, Luciano was careful

to avoid any further acts or involvements that would lead to another term in a penitentiary. His operations in narcotics and prostitution were so complex it would take a magician to unravel the many threads that could ultimately lead to him.

Yet Costello began to move away from Luciano. He began to find his own niche, independent of his friend, in the crime world.

While Masseria and Maranzano played their game of hide and seek, Luciano took over Masseria's rackets. Masseria declared he was retired. Maranzano didn't believe it. Neither did anyone else. They knew Masseria for the schemer he was and so Maranzano was doubly on guard against any treacherous moves that Masseria might make. This included keeping a close eye on his own lieutenants. He kept particular watch on Luciano's rising prominence.

In the next six months there was a great change in Costello. Many of the compunctions he had harbored about the elimination of rivals slowly were dissipated. He understood that it had to be that way, that it was a case of self-preservation and so he understood Luciano a little better.

He, too, began to rise higher in importance, and with it he

sank a little lower in his morals. He could shrug off murders, accept dealings in narcotics, approve of illicit traffic in liquor and accept the profits from it with the same sort of equanimity that a legitimate businessman accepts his trade and profits.

Luciano sensed that Costello was trying to move away from the circle of his influence and took steps to stop it. He needed men he could trust and he knew he could trust Costello completely.

Moreover, Costello's gambling enterprises had expanded to the point where it was bringing in thousands of dollars weekly. If Costello became an independent, then a part of that revenue would be lost. Accordingly, Luciano called Costello and asked him to come to his apartment for a meeting—not to talk Costello into remaining close to Luciano in all things, but to discuss the Masseria-Maranzano situation.

When Costello was seated comfortably in a large armchair in Luciano's suite, the wily hood outlined what he had in mind and what he had learned concerning the plans of Masseria and Maranzano.

"I have learned," Luciano began, "that Maranzano held a big meeting in a hall in the Bronx with about five hundred

of his men. Maranzano had laid plans to kill Masseria. That part is okay with me. It will save us the trouble. However, he also had made up a list containing a few other names."

Luciano paused and his eyes darkened. "That list contains the names of Joe Adonis, Vito Genovese, and *you*, and *me*! There are other names on the list but they don't concern us. I know about Maranzano. He's a nut. He thinks he's Julius Caesar. He wants to take over the whole town. We can't let that happen."

The use of the plural *we* didn't escape Costello's attention. "What are *you* going to do about it, Charlie? You have some plans lined out?"

"Sure. That's why I wanted to talk to you first to get your opinion. My idea is to put Joe Adonis in charge of Brooklyn with Albert Anastasia as his lieutenant. They can pick their own men. Ever since Masseria knocked off Tom Reina, Brooklyn has been wide open. Now we take it over."

"Suppose Maranzano fights it? What then?"

"I expect him to. We'll meet it when it comes. Next, I will put Vito Genovese in charge of all the shylocking and enforcing. He is a good man for that."

Luciano paused, then threw in his clincher. "For you, my

good friend, I have something big in mind. Get in touch with Cy Nathanson in Atlantic City. He runs the town with Nucky Johnson. Ask him to rent several suites of rooms in one of the hotels. Then call a meeting of all the big importers of liquor: Danny Walsh, King Solomon, Longy Zwillman, Salvatore Spitalo, Irving Bitz, and Meyer Lansky. Benjamin Siegel is in Philly. Lansky will get in touch with him. Tell them the meeting has my approval. Okay, Frank?"

Costello thought about it for a while. He knew he was being positioned but there was nothing he could do about it. If he had wanted to refuse at first, what Luciano said while he was mulling the idea over changed his mind.

"You will organize a combine, Frank, of all the importers in a sort of corporation. Each man will contribute an equal amount, say fifty thousand dollars. You will handle the purchase of the liquor, and by buying in large amounts you will get a better price and everyone will profit by it. You and I will split our end down the middle."

That was the selling point that convinced Costello. He foresaw huge profits. "When do I start, Charlie?"

"Right now."

"What about Maranzano's list, you and me?"

"I'll take care of it, Frank. Leave it to me. No sweat."

"Okay, Charlie. Whatever you say."

Costello didn't go into the meeting unprepared. He studied all the elements of the project. He got the prices from the various distributors of liquors in the Islands, based on increased lots on a single order. When he talked of hundred-thousand dollar orders and two-hundred thousand dollar orders, and yet higher he got results.

He also bartered for exclusive orders, that is, by purchasing all his needs from one specific distributor and promised that the total would run into the millions in a year he got even lower prices.

He worked out a system of storage and distribution so that the loads of liquor coming into the docks could be conveyed to a warehouse in New York with the least possible risk. It was here that he proved himself as a man capable of infinite organization.

Cy Nathanson had reserved eight suites in the name of the Royal Products Corporation, telling the manager it was a business convention.

Al Capone got word of the meeting and called Luciano.

Capone said he wanted in and that he would come personally. Luciano conveyed the message to Costello.

When all the gang leaders had gathered together, Costello wasted no time in getting the meeting started. Neither Luciano nor Costello had entertained the slightest thought that this meeting was to be more than merely the organization of a monopoly to buy liquor at lesser prices for more profit.

What developed was the beginning of the National Crime Cartel, in which all the various gang leaders from across the country were to unite and work together cooperatively in the buying and selling of narcotics, liquor, gambling casinos, and legitimate business enterprises wherein each would hold a certain percentage.

As it was later to turn out, the National Crime Cartel was to take over the Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas after Bugsy Siegel was rubbed out, and thereafter to buy into many other hotels and casinos.

And it was there that Costello and Meyer Lansky became the Syndicate's advisers as to where and when to invest the millions of dollars that otherwise would have had to be held in secret holes or in bank deposit vaults.

Costello spoke earnestly at the meeting. He had facts and he had figures. He named distributors in the Islands who had offered prices from ten to twenty per cent lower than what was now being paid, if the purchases were in the sums he had guaranteed to the different distributors. He outlined the manner of shipping, the unloading, the warehousing and the distribution, and then, in a soft voice, told the assemblage the benefits they would derive.

"What this means is that we shall have a veritable monopoly and control of all liquor in the United States. We'll have bases in the Islands and Canada. There may be a little difficulty in getting the stuff across the Detroit River from Windsor but I have talked with the boys in Detroit and have been assured of complete cooperation.

"All they want is five per cent of every load and I have agreed to it. At the most, it will break down to about two-hundred thousand dollars a year, basing my figure on the fact that we will bring over about four million dollars worth of stuff during that time. In exchange for that five per cent we will be guaranteed delivery. The risk is all theirs. Are there any objections?"

There were none.

"The initial investment, ac-

cording to my figures, should be a round one-hundred thousand dollars each." He let a small smile cross his face. "In cash, of course."

He paused again. "I don't believe any of you brought that kind of cash, with you. I will suggest then that you arrange to have the money delivered to Luciano within a week so that this operation can begin as soon as possible. Is there anyone present who won't be in a position to deliver the amount?"

No one said he wouldn't be able to deliver the money.

Al Capone, who had been listening intently all the time that Costello spoke, said, "Frank, I have a very large operation. If there are no objections I should like to come in for two shares instead of one."

Costello looked around the room, from one to the other. "Is there an objection?"

Again there were no objections.

King Solomon said, "I'd like to come in for two shares too, if it's okay."

Danny Walsh asked for two shares. "There are a lot of people with important money in Rhode Island who prefer drinking the best liquor. I can move a lot of goods there."

"Well, if there are no objections," Costello said, "then it is

agreed that Al, King, and Danny are in for two shares."

Bugsy Siegel spoke up then. "Frank, how does Meyer and me fit into the picture? I know you didn't call us into this meeting just to run for sandwiches and coffee."

"Charlie will tell you about it, Ben." Costello paused and looked around the room again. Then, "I will give you all a report on the first shipment as soon as I have things set up. That depends, of course, on how soon everyone comes up with his end of the money. If there are no more questions I think we can call it a day and have some fun. Cy has arranged a little party in Suite 410. There will be some female company to live things up."

There was a chorus of low yells of approval, and the meeting broke up as everyone made his way toward Suite 410.

IN THE WEEK that followed the meeting, Luciano received several calls concerning the meeting from Max "Boo Boo" Hoff in Philadelphia, Johnny Lazia in Kansas City, Missouri, and from Moe Dalitz and Lou Rothkopf in Cleveland. They all wanted in.

"That's okay with me," he told every caller. "However, Frank C. is handling the whole thing. You can't do business on



JOE MASSERIA

the phone, not on this, anyway. I suggest you come in and have a talk with Frank C. No trouble. You can get in. So you won't have to make two trips. let me tell you that the initial investment is a hundred grand. If you want in, bring it with you."

So now the Combination, as it was referred to, extended as far west as Kansas City. Arnold Rothstein learned of the new setup and called Costello.

"I'd like to talk to you about that new deal that was set up in Atlantic City, Frank. I'll come up to your apartment."

"Okay, Arnold. How soon?"

"Twenty minutes."

Before Rothstein came up, Costello called Luciano and told him about Rothstein's call. "What do I do with him, Charlie?"

"I don't want to offend him, Frank. He put me in touch with a few people who handle a lot of white stuff and bankrolled me for ten grand the first time and then twenty grand the second time. I had to pay him a stiff price for it but it was worth it. I'll tell you what he'll talk about. Bankrolling the deal, as much of it as he can get. He really shylocks. Up to a hundred per cent. Make whatever kind of deal you think is best."

"For us?"

"No, Frank, for yourself." He hung up.

Rothstein came right to the point as soon as he sat down. "I have been very nice to a lot of the boys in town, Frank, including Charlie. I introduced him to some good people and on my recommendation they started doing business with him. Now, this combination that was set up in Atlantic City, I want a piece of the action in New York, say ten per cent. How much will it cost me?"

"It's not that simple, Arnold. There's Charlie, me, Spitalo, Bitz, Lansky, and Siegel in New York. We also have to

take care of Joe Adonis and Albert Anastasia. That makes eight of us. If I give you ten per cent it would mean you get almost an equal share."

"Wait a minute, Frank. I know that Adonis, Anastasia, Lansky and Siegel won't be in for a full cut. A half or a quarter is my guess. I'll bet they're in for a quarter apiece. That makes five instead of eight. That means twenty per cent for each. You cut two per cent from each of the five and I'll get my ten per cent."

Costello had heard about Rothstein's trigger mind when it came to figuring odds and money but this kind of quick calculation threw him. He regarded Rothstein with new respect.

"There's something else I want you to know, Frank. You've got some books and gambling joints going for you. You could get hit real bad some day and need a friend. I'll be your friend. Any amount. Or, you may come up with another proposition that will need bankrolling. If so, you can come to me. How much do I have to kick in?"

"A hundred grand."

Rothstein reached into an inside pocket of his jacket and took out a sheaf of bills, all of them of hundred and thousand-dollar denominations,

and counted out a hundred thousand dollars.

"That's it, Frank. A hundred grand. I'm in for ten per cent. I'll want to see the shipping manifests and the bills of lading each time. Can I depend on you for that?"

"Sure, Arnold."

"I assume you will warehouse New York's end of the shipments in a warehouse somewhere in town?"

"In Brooklyn. That's where Joe Adonis and Anastasia come in. They're going to protect the stuff until it's distributed."

"Good enough." He held out his hand and Costello shook it. He turned then and walked out without another word leaving Costello in a mild daze. He had just had a lesson he wasn't going to forget.

The kind of pitch Rothstein made to him was one he was to use many times himself in the years to come, especially when he moved into New Orleans with his slot machines after making Governor Huey Long a partner in the deal.

There was an ironic ending to the Rothstein deal a short time later, before the first payoff on the shipment of liquor was to be made to the various investors, Rothstein among them.

On November 4, 1928, Arnold Rothstein was shot and mor-

tally wounded in a room in the Park Central Hotel. He later died in the Polyclinic Hospital without revealing the name of the man who shot him. Costello then pocketed Rothstein's hundred-thousand dollar investment and divided the ten per cent back into the New York Syndicate's end of the deal.

The story about Rothstein's murder was that he had welshed on markers he gave in a poker game to the tune of \$350,000.

What was even more ironic was the fact that as he lay dying and Herbert Hoover was beating Al Smith in the presidential election, Rothstein stood to win a cool million dollars he had bet on the outcome.

With the passing of *The Brain of Broadway* a successor was sought who would be able to handle the vast amounts of layoff bets for the nation's bookies.

Costello and Meyer Lansky recommended Frank Erickson as the man to take over Rothstein's place. Costello, naturally, got a piece of the action, and before long was a full partner. However, the great amount of money that flowed into New York as layoff bets was too much for even Erickson and Costello to handle.

Three other big-time gam-

blers were brought into the picture, "Big Porky" Lassooff, Ed Curd, and Gilbert Lee Beckley. Beckley, one the shrewdest gamblers in the country, fixed the odds on all sports events, much as Jimmy The Greek does today, and soon earned Rothstein's name as The Brain.

Here again, Costello came into the picture for a piece of the action, taking a percentage from all three men. There could be no denying the fact now that Costello was an opportunist and a man who could maneuver himself into profitable positions.

Meyer Lansky, a brilliant mind when it came to financial dealings, became a close associate to Costello. He foresaw the death of the Eighteenth Amendment.

In a meeting with Costello, Lansky pointed out the belief that Prohibition would be repealed.

"It can't continue, Frank," Lansky declared. "The people don't want it. The proof of that is in our own liquor business. There is more booze in the country now than before the Prohibition Law was passed. Furthermore, it is in the hands of illegal purveyors."

Lansky grinned. "And that includes us. Now, when the law is repealed a big source of income will be lost to us. We

have to go into another area. There's one thing no law can ever repeal. That's gambling. We should concentrate on that. Now."

"What do you suggest?" Costello asked.

"A broadening of gambling enterprises, bookie joints, casinos, numbers, every other form of gambling including horse racing, of course, and interests in race tracks."

"Sounds okay. I'll give it a lot of thought."

He did. In the several months that followed Costello looked into many aspects of the situation with the aid of Erickson, Ed Curd, and Gilbert Lee Beckley, men whom he respected for their knowledge of gambling. He was advised that expanding operations would mean the protection of authorities as well as police.

Beckley, who was to become involved with Lansky in casinos in Havana prior to Castro's takeover, said, "My advice is to get into politics. Back judges, district attorneys, lawyers with political ambitions, legislators, state senators, and the governor. When you've established yourself with them then you can get their approval and protection for anything you want to run, as long and as broad as you like."

Costello followed Beckley's advice. He did it smoothly, without fanfare. He contributed to Tammany Hall, to the political campaigns of judges, legislators, and mayoral candidates. Because he was discreet in the way he did it, the recipients of his favors did not have to declare any iota of his contributions and pocketed most of it.

This was exactly what Costello wanted them to do. It was then a payoff for future considerations and when the time came to ask for them he got them.

He was truly surprised as he went along the path of corrupting police and public officials at the ease with which it could be accomplished. The corrupted hand seemed to be always extended and the very same men who preached against it, who declared from the public forums that corruption was the greatest evil in the sphere of political life, were the ones who were actually the most venal.

Costello was able, through his political connections to take over two plush gambling establishments in Saratoga Springs, a small town of some 19,000 population, adjacent to the famed Saratoga race track which in season drew the millionaires and fast-buck gamblers.

The casinos drew many politicians as well as the mil-

lionaires and the big-time gamblers because it was located just north of Albany, the state capitol.

Costello made sure that none of the politicians suffered any great losses or any losses. He made Frank Erickson his partner in the venture, and the two, having acquired polish in both speech and dress, were perfect hosts.

MEANWHILE, things were happening in New York City between Joe "The Boss" Masseria and Salvatore Maranzano. The cunning Luciano now decided it was finally time to get rid of both.

Luciano called a meeting in which Costello, Joe Adonis, Meyer Lansky, Albert Anastasia, and Bugsy Siegel sat in. He outlined his plan for getting rid of Masseria and Maranzano.

It was a plot so spectacularly outrageous that even Anastasia and Siegel, two of the most accomplished killers in the Syndicate, were moved to shake their heads in disbelief.

"I will invite Masseria to lunch at Scarpato's. After lunch I will excuse myself and go into the washroom. You, Ben, and you, Albert, will eliminate Masseria. It is a simple plan."

Costello vetoed it. "I believe it is too dangerous, involves a potential accusation or even a

direct one that you set it up. No, Charlie, it is no good. We know that Masseria likes to dine at Scarpato's. Sooner or later he will go there. When he does, that will be the time to eliminate him.

"However, I wish to declare here that I wash my hands of the entire matter." Costello looked at the men. "I do not have any desire to involve myself in the killings. I have made many contacts among politicians and the police authorities. I suggest that the same apply to Lansky. We can serve better in our own distinctive roles, by aiding anyone in the organization who will get into trouble. It is so, Meyer?"

"Yes, I agree fully," Lansky replied.

"I see your point," Luciano said. "It is well taken. Very well then. What has been said here has not been said at all. It is wiped out, erased. You two have not been present at all. If you wish, Frank, you and Meyer may leave."

Costello and Lansky rose, nodded to the others and left.

Luciano had Masseria tailed day and night, and finally it paid off. Masseria drove his steel armored sedan, a massive car with plate glass an inch thick in all its windows, to a garage near the Nueva Villa Tammaro at 2715 West Fif-

teenth Street, Coney Island, and parked it.

He then went into the restaurant alone. At two o'clock the quiet of the little street near the bay was broken by the roar of gunfire. Three men, Albert Anastasia, Bugsy Siegel, and Vito Genovese, walked out immediately after the shooting, looked back into the restaurant, appeared to be satisfied, got into an automobile parked at the curb and drove away.

When the police got there they found Mrs. Tammaro bending over the body of Joe the Boss. A few chairs were overturned but other than that the restaurant was not disturbed. Police questioned Mrs. Tammaro. They got no place.

"I not see the men," she declared in broken English. "They come fast, shoot, go fast. Nothing see. Nothing." She crossed herself and began to weep.

Her son-in-law, Gerardo Scarpato, the owner of the restaurant, came in just then. He said he was out for a walk when the shooting occurred. Since there had been no other diners in the restaurant at the time of the shooting the police found themselves up a blank wall.

Several hours later, investigating police found the car which the killers used in fleeing from the murder scene. It

was abandoned at West First Street near King's Highway, Brooklyn, about two miles from the Nueva Villa Tammaro.

On the back seat were three pistols. One lacked two cartridges. One had discharged three cartridges only recently. The third was fully loaded. Two other guns were found in the alley that runs along one side of the restaurant.

Investigation showed the abandoned car had been reported stolen the previous November by Ercole Marchino of 150 East Forty-ninth Street, Manhattan. The plates on the car were new. They were not registered to the owner, police revealed.

And so this April 14, 1931, was the beginning of the infamous blood bath that ended the Castellammare war.

In the days that followed, Maranzano was slain by the same three men who had killed Masseria, and then the killing of the "Mustache Petes" across the country followed and the younger element, the new breed of gangsters, took over.

A council was formed comprised of Luciano, Costello, Lansky, Adonis, Anastasia, Louis "Lepke" Buchalter, who had taken over most of the labor rackets, Bugsy Siegel, and Vito Genovese.

Of them all today, only Cos-



AL CAPONE

tello and Lansky are alive, the only two who decided at a certain point in their lives that carrying a gun was better left to others.

IN CHICAGO, on June 27, 1932, the Democratic National Convention convened to nominate a candidate for the President of the United States.

Al Smith, former Governor of New York who had failed in 1928 to win the election, was trying again, backed by Tammany Hall. His rival for the nomination was Franklin Delano Roosevelt who was backed

by Jimmy Hines, the West Side boss of New York.

Tammany district leader Albert C. Marinelli, who was pledged to Smith, led one delegation and Hines the other. Both were in suites in the Drake Hotel on Michigan Boulevard and Walton Place overlooking Lake Michigan.

Sharing the suite with Jimmy Hines was Frank Costello! In the suite with Marinelli was the distinguished *Capo di Capi* Mr. Charles "Lucky" Luciano! Coordinator and aide de camp for both Costello and Luciano was Meyer Lansky!

When Gilbert Lee Beckley advised Costello to get into politics he never dreamed the extent to which Costello would go in following that advice.

Lansky and Costello were also seen with such powerful political bosses as Huey Long of Louisiana, James Curley of Boston, and with aides of Tom Pendergast, boss of Missouri, who was instrumental in the rise of Harry Truman to the Presidency. There were other nabobs of the political scenes from across the country who were observed in the company of either Costello, Lansky, or Luciano.

It was the plan of this unholy trio to create a different setup for themselves in the matter of

political protection. Up to this point the hood and gangster was at the mercy of the political office holder and had to pay heavily for small favors.

Costello, Lansky, and Luciano schemed to reverse the situation by contributing large sums of money to campaigns and by putting the force and power of the underworld behind elections.

It wasn't anything new. Capone and Torrio did it in Chicago when they were instrumental in electing William "Big Bill" Thompson as mayor. What was new was the fact that at this time they were playing for all the blue chips, for the top man in the nation.

Roosevelt was nominated. The men responsible for it were Huey Long, James Curley, Tom Pendergast, and Jimmy Hines, and back of this quartet was the Mafia trio of Costello, Lansky, and Luciano.

It really didn't make any difference to the trio which of the two candidates was nominated because they were backing both. When, however, it appeared that Roosevelt had all the strength they swung over to him.

There has never been any evidence, of course, that Roosevelt directly or indirectly had favored the mob. As a matter of fact, to prove he was not

a machine candidate Roosevelt went after Tammany Hall after taking office. While still governor he ordered hearings on Mayor Jimmy Walker and appointed Judge Samuel Seabury as the special prosecutor for the investigation.

On September 1st of that year Walker resigned as Mayor of New York. The pressure of the Seabury hearings was too great. Roosevelt didn't stop with Walker. He went on, destroying the power of the very men who helped nominate and elect him.

Tom Pendergast was sent to prison and died a broken old man after his release. The IRS went after Huey Long and had enough evidence to indict him on a score of counts. However, he was slain by an assassin at Baton Rouge in 1935 before the indictments were ordered. Jimmy Hines went to prison.

All this did not affect the Syndicate, not in New York or in other parts of the country. What the Syndicate did was to transfer its power to legitimate businessmen who were nothing but figureheads in the many enterprises the Syndicate controlled.

These quasi-executives, under order and direction of the Syndicate, contributed to campaigns, made the requests for favors the Syndicate wanted,

and even arranged for certain types of legislation on state and national levels.

During the convention in Chicago, Costello set up the deal with Governor Huey Long for legalizing slot machines in Louisiana.

"Won't work," Long told Costello. "Unless, it is done under a charter for charitable purposes."

"Suits me," Costello said. "It doesn't make any difference how it's done so long as it's done. How much for charity?"

"Oh, maybe ten, fifteen per cent, give or take a few points."

"That's fine. I'll contact one of the lawyers in New Orleans and have him draw up a charter."

"I'll give you the name of a lawyer," Long said. He wrote out a name on a card and handed it to Costello. It was as simple as that.

The death of Governor Huey Long, the imprisonment of Luciano, and the demise, natural or otherwise, of other cohorts did not deter Costello one whit in the organization he had constructed.

A meeting was held in Hot Springs, Arkansas, where Owey Madden had "retired" to enjoy the waning years of his life. Madden ran things in Hot Springs as he had run them in Hell's Kitchen. The stocky

Irishman played host to the meeting.

Costello said, "New Orleans is wide open now. Everyone is in on the act, independents, madams, whores, bookies, gamblers. We gotta do something."

Kastel said, "Long had a bunch of weak punks running things for him, on his orders, of course. Since he died, the whole bunch of 'em is running around like chickens with their heads chopped off."

"What about Leche?" Seymour Weiss asked. He referred to Richard W. Leche, the new governor. Weiss was one of Kastel's lieutenants, a sharpie.

"We'll handle him," Lansky said.

"The thing to do is to send in some of the boys," Costello said, "and have them put things in order; bookie joints, gambling casinos, the madams and their houses. We'll also send in a lot more slot machines. Kastel, you and Weiss will run things."

"Look, Frank," Kastel said, "I think it would be better if we got things straightened out there with the people before making a big move like you say."

"I understand, Phil. It will be done. Leave it to us. Meyer and I will take care of it."

Costello and Lansky held a private meeting with Madden

and told him Hot Springs needed some new forms of entertainment for the many wealthy citizens who visited the city to take the baths.

"What's to be done?" Madden asked.

"Well, the first thing is to expand the Southern Club, build it up, redecorate it. We'll put in the necessary money. We'll also establish a fund for payoffs to the right people. You should know who they are and handle it."

Madden nodded.

Lansky said, "You should spread the word around that gambling built a new park, a golf course, and other recreational facilities. You'll be able to do that by taking a percentage off the top from each day's play. That will keep the local people happy."

Costello sensed shortly after the meeting in Hot Springs that Lansky was moving away from him so far as his support in the Syndicate was concerned.

This bothered Costello a great deal because he felt that Lansky's support was necessary, essential even, to the operation of all his enterprises. Lansky, who handled millions of dollars in gangland money which he plowed into legitimate enterprises, and all of them paid off handsomely, had the major enforcers in his pock-

et. In case of trouble, these men would have to be called upon in order to straighten things out.

Furthermore, the Council was solidly behind Lansky despite the fact that he was Jewish and Costello was Sicilian. Costello decided to get in touch with Luciano in Italy and enlist his aid.

He told Luciano that Lansky had split with him in the ownership of the Piping Rock Casino in Saratoga and that Lansky had invested money for a half-interest in the Arrowhead Inn which Joe Adonis owned.

Lansky's coolness toward him worried Costello and he so told Luciano. He informed Luciano that Lansky was investing heavily in Havana, and was playing footsie with Fulgencio Batista who was certain to wind up as President of Cuba. There was more.

Luciano said, "I've heard everything you've told me before, Frank. I don't understand this at all. I'll get in touch with some of the boys and straighten this out for you. In the meantime you sit tight and let things go as they are."

Costello agreed to do just that.

Lansky, during this time, found occasion for romance. He met a manicurist named



MEYER LANSKY

Thelma "Teddy" Schwartz, who worked in the Embassy Hotel in New York City. He got his manicures from her and tipped her lavishly.

One thing led to another and then Lansky asked Teddy for a date. She accepted. He took her to dinner at a small restaurant in Long Island. Teddy Schwartz had been married previously and had a son. She had divorced her husband some time before.

Attractive, with a sense of humor, she intrigued Lansky. He proposed marriage and she accepted him.

Word came to Lansky about

Costello's call to Luciano and he decided to kill two birds with one stone. He would honeymoon in Europe and while there talk with Luciano.

In Italy, Lansky and Luciano had several meetings. What they talked about never came out. However, on Lansky's return to New York things began to happen.

FIRST WAS the Citizens' Crime Commission in Broward County where Lansky built the Colonial Inn, the Club Greenacres, and the Club LaBoheme.

This Citizens' Crime Commission was made up of important businessmen who were fearful their business would be damaged if word got out that the underworld was in control.

The mob turned to Lansky. Costello sat back and waited. If Lansky couldn't solve the upheaval in Broward County he would lose a great deal of his prestige and power. That would solve the situation.

Lansky's suggestion was to go legal, make gambling as legal as it was in Las Vegas and Reno. Among the men who attended the meeting in Miami were Sam "Gameboy" Miller of Cleveland, Lefty Clarke of Detroit, Nig Rosen of Detroit and Cleveland, and a dozen others, all of whom had gambling interests in Broward County.

Lansky explained his strategy. "If and when the casinos are closed we'll contact key reporters, radio commentators, friendly legislators, and other politicians and ask them to foster legalized gambling as a means of attracting tourists.

"During that time we'll close all Syndicate restaurants, nightclubs, all service industries, and we'll spread the word that many of the major hotels won't open when cool season, the months from November to April, come.

"We will plant stories that the lack of gambling is the reason, because without it fifty per cent of the regular winter visitors won't come to Miami. It will cause a major recession economically."

"That," said Lefty Clarke, "doesn't sound like strategy to me but more like tragedy."

"Give it a chance, Lefty," Lansky argued. "There's no other way that I can see out of this. Unless any of you here have a better suggestion." No one did.

The drive for legalized gambling went into full swing and seemed to be making headway. Then Estes Kefauver came to town to begin the series of hearings on organized crime in interstate commerce. The drive failed.

Needless to say, Kefauver's

study of crime and politics ripped the town apart. The Intelligence Division of the Attorney General's office had gathered a load of information on Lansky and Costello. It was handed over to Kefauver who began his hearings in Miami on May 2, 1950, with the help of the Greater Miami Crime Commission under Dan Sullivan, a former FBI agent.

One of the first witnesses called was Ben Eisen who, with his brother Seymour, was accountant for the Syndicate's gambling clubs in Broward County.

Meyer and Jake Lansky's names came up constantly through the 930 pages of testimony taken, as well as other names of nationally known gangsters. Occasionally, Costello's name came up. The revelations that notorious gangsters were tied in with political office holders from the sheriff to the governor's office stunned decent citizens.

On October 11, 1950, Lansky was called to testify in New York City. He steadfastly refused to answer any questions and took the Fifth Amendment time and time and time again. Kefauver recommended that contempt proceedings be lodged against Lansky.

Costello fared no better. He, too, refused to answer questions

and hid behind the Fifth Amendment. Both Lansky and Costello were sentenced to prison terms. Both appealed.

The United States Court of Appeals in Cincinnati denounced the procedures of the Kefauver Committee as "an out-and-out violation of the Fifth Amendment." It unanimously reversed the conviction of Joseph Aiuppa, an alleged racketeer, who had refused to answer twelve committee questions and had subsequently been found guilty of contempt and fined a thousand dollars and sentenced to three months in jail.

The Court declared:

"We are unable to give judicial sanction, in the teeth of the Fifth Amendment, to the employment by a committee of United States Senators, of methods of examination of witnesses which constitute a triple threat:

" 'Answer truly and you have given evidence leading to your conviction for a violation of Federal laws, answer falsely and you will be convicted of perjury. Refuse to answer and you will be found guilty of criminal contempt and punished by a fine and imprisonment.' "

"In our humble judgment, to place a person not even on trial for a specified crime in such a

predicament is in direct violation of the Fifth Amendment to our National Constitution."

Lawyers for Costello and Lansky argued the appeals and ventured the following:

"On the basis of the decision by the United States Circuit Court of Appeals we can only conclude that something is fundamentally wrong in the hearings conducted by Senator Kefauver and the rest of the Committee.

"It is deplorable, legally, ethically, and within the spirit of the Fifth Amendment, that a group of United States senators can ignore with a blithe wave of the hand the fact that the Fifth Amendment says, 'No person shall be held to answer for a capital or other infamous crime unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, nor shall he be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.'"

Senator Kefauver replied to this argument. He declared that, "Costello lied and evaded during questioning by the committee. That, Your Honor, is hardly an overstatement. The stupidity of it all is that the truth came out anyhow, and that, in most of the instances, Costello could have

admitted the truth in the first place without incriminating himself for anything on which he could be prosecuted."

All the arguments presented by attorneys for Lansky and Costello were to no avail. Both went to prison.

When Costello was released he returned to New York. Lansky was released later, on July 21, 1953. He took Teddy to Florida.

It wasn't to be the last of the troubles for Lansky nor for Costello for the IRS had begun a probe in 1950 on Costello's tax returns, and as a result of the spin off of the Costello investigation, Lansky too was investigated.

Lansky, of course, blamed Costello for this although it was a certainty that the IRS would have investigated him if Costello had never been heard of by any federal agency.

The government proved a case against Lansky late in 1953. A report filed by Joseph D. Delfine, a special agent, recommended that fraud penalties be asserted against Lansky for the years 1944, 1945, and 1947.

Costello also was indicted for tax evasion the same year and was convicted the following year and sentenced to prison again. His luck was running out. So was his influence over

the Syndicate. Too, the split between Costello and Lansky had widened. It wasn't a healthy situation for either one.

Joe Adonis, who was close to Costello, was ordered deported to Italy in August of 1953. He decided to fight deportation proceedings. In the end, however, two indictments charging him with perjury, lying under oath about his citizenship, convinced him to accept the inevitable. He left for Italy in January, 1956. Lansky couldn't have been more pleased because it removed an important and strong ally of Costello's.

THE PUBLICITY which followed Costello's appearance before the Kefauver Crime Committee, and the subsequent indictments for tax evasion, marked him as a man dangerous to the status quo of the Syndicate. Lansky called a meeting for the purpose of deciding Costello's future, meaning a vote to eliminate him.

The two sides, those for Costello and those against him, were sharply divided. Albert Anastasia, who hated Lansky, naturally was opposed to anything Lansky suggested. Siding with Anastasia were Longie Zwillman, Tony Bender, and Vito Genovese. Lansky's supporters were Jimmy "Blue Eyes" Alo, Joey Rao, Tommy

Luchese, and Trigger Mike Coppola.

Anastasia argued long and loud in Costello's favor. He even went so far as to declare that Costello, a Sicilian, was entitled to "a helluva lot more consideration than Lansky" insinuating that Lansky who was Jewish didn't even belong as a Mafioso.

It was the wrong thing to say. Anastasia's statement about Lansky's Jewishness irked "Longy" Zwillman who contemplated at the moment switching sides. He caught Lansky's eye. Lansky shook his head, indicating that he wanted Zwillman to stick with Costello for appearance's sake.

Several votes were taken. The last vote dropped Costello from the National Crime Syndicate. The question now remained as to whether he should be eliminated or allowed to live.

Augie Carfano, who had his eye on Costello's gambling empire, argued that Costello be hit. "He's bringing too much heat! There ain't a day goes by but what he's in the newspapers. I say, hit him! Get rid of him. Let's get it over with!"

Anastasia fixed Carfano with a steely glare. There was no mistaking that look. Anastasia was going to kill Carfano, come hell or high water.

Jimmy Alo now argued in favor of Costello. "I say NO!" he thundered. "Costello has earned his right to live, and his place in the organization. He has done nothing to anyone here, nothing in the way of breaking any rules. He will not be hit!"

In the final voting, only Carfano voted that Costello be hit.

Anastasia brought word to Costello of the outcome of the meeting. "You're out of the organization, Frank."

The news didn't throw Costello. He was a little tired of the strain of fighting the government, the heat that had been turned on him by all the publicity he had received. He wanted to retire from all activities and live the peaceful life.

"That's okay," he said. "I'm satisfied. I'm getting a little old, Albert. I'll just take things easy from now on. It's better that way."

"What about Carfano? You going to let him get away with what he tried to do?"

Costello shrugged. "What's the difference? He didn't succeed. That's all that matters."

Anastasia shook his head. "No, Frank. It's not all that matters at all. He's your enemy. He'll always be your enemy."

"Not any more. I'm out. I've got nothing he wants."

"You don't understand, Frank. He'll figure that as long as you are alive you will bear a grudge against him for the way he voted against you. You will represent a danger to him."

"Tell him I won't."

Anastasia shook his head in frustration. He wanted Costello to give him the word to knock off Carfano. He argued further but to no avail.

"I'm out of the organization, Albert," Costello said wearily. "I want to stay out. I don't want to get involved in anything like a killing. If I do, there will be repercussions. Don't you see?"

"I can handle them."

"I don't want you to. Let the matter drop."

On the evening of May 2, 1957, Costello returned to his plush apartment in a fashionable building on Central Park West. Waiting for him in the foyer was a gunman, a fat, nondescript hood. As Costello entered the foyer, the gunman stepped behind him.

"Good-bye, Frank," the gunman said, and fired. The .38 caliber slug had plowed a furrow behind Costello's right ear. The blood gushed down his cheek.

He thought fast. He dropped to the floor and stayed there, feigning death. The gunman strode from the foyer in a

waddling gait, leaped into a Caddy parked in front of the building and sped away.

The doorman called the police and ambulance. Costello was sped to the Roosevelt Hospital a short distance away, and all hell broke loose in the underworld as word of Costello's wounding was broadcast on the late news programs, and the following day in all the newspapers.

"Who did it, Frank?" a detective asked Costello in the hospital.

"I don't know. I never saw the guy before in my life."

"Come on, Frank, you don't want that bum to try it again, do you? Give us his name and we'll pick him up."

Costello persisted. "I'm telling you the truth. I never saw the guy before in my life."

The detectives went through Costello's pockets. They found some interesting pieces of evidence. Costello had almost a thousand dollars in cash, which didn't mean anything because that amount of money was peanuts to someone like him.

What was of interest to the detectives was a slip of paper with the following handwritten notations:

Gross casino wins as of	
4/27/57	\$651,284
Casino wins	less



markers 434,695
 Slot wins 62,844
 Markers 153,745
 Of even greater interest and appeal to the detectives than the above were the following two notions: L. \$40,000. H. 10,000.

The dollar sign had been omitted from the latter notation but obviously it meant dollars not beans.

Costello was taken to the 54th Street Station after being given treatment for his wound which proved to be superficial. He was given a thorough interrogation regarding the notations on the slip of paper taken from his pocket.

"Does the notation 'L \$40,000' refer to Lansky, Frank?" the detective asked.

Costello shook his head: "I told you I never saw that piece of paper before. I don't know what it means."

The shorter of the three detectives, interrogating Costello said, "Frank, I know that slug didn't scramble your brains. It was a nick. You're lucky you're alive. That's something you should be thankful for. Now, neither of us has been through what you've been so we feel just fine. We know you're too smart to believe we're going to swallow your story.

"You may be telling the truth about the guy who shot

you but you sure as hell aren't telling us the truth about this slip of paper. Now, do you want to cooperate or do we call in the D.A. and let him have a go at you, and then release the story to the papers about this—" he waved the slip — "this piece of damning evidence that you are still involved with gambling and with the Syndicate?"

"I don't know anything about that slip of paper and I don't know how it got into my pocket. That's it. I'm sorry I can't help you boys."

The D.A. on duty was brought in. He was an intelligent, shrewd lawyer with a great deal of experience. He examined the slip of paper.

"Frank," the D.A. said, "the handwriting on this slip of paper was made by two different persons. We have a file on almost everyone with whom you've been associated with the past twenty years. They've been arrested and fingerprinted and they had to sign the fingerprint cards.

"We'll work on that for a year if necessary but we'll find out who wrote those figures. You can play ball with us or we'll turn this over to the IRS for further investigation of income tax evasion, if we tie you in with any of these figures. How's that?"

"I'm sorry, I don't know any-

thing about that slip of paper."

Further questioning was useless. Costello was taken before the grand jury where he was questioned again, and again refused to answer by taking the Fifth Amendment. He was declared in contempt and sentenced to thirty days in jail.

It had become a boringly routine affair for Costello. From the time of his appearance before the Kefauver Committee in 1951, he had made appearances in court actions as a defendant, appellant, or petitioner almost fifty times.

His severest trial was his conviction on income tax evasion for which he had served three and a half years. This thirty-day sentence didn't even bring a frown to his face.

The police department's criminal investigation division went after Costello and the figures on the slip of paper. After a long and diligent investigation they succeeded in tracing the figures to Las Vegas and the Tropicana Hotel in which both Costello and Lansky had interests.

The Nevada Gaming Control Board proved that a part of the notations were made by Michael J. Tanico, a cashier in the Tropicana Hotel and Casino. Tanico had been employed by Costello in the Beverly Club in New Orleans. Costello's

partners in that joint were Lansky, Dandy Phil Kastel, and Carlos Marcello.

The results of the investigation by the Nevada Gaming Control Board didn't surprise them because Dandy Phil Kastel had arranged for the construction of the Tropicana.

Lovely Margaret, Kastel's wife, a former New Orleans prostitute knew that her husband had been a lieutenant of Arnold Rothstein's, and had been involved in bootlegging, mail fraud, extortion, and several other boyish pranks in which he had practiced his many talents.

The finding of the slip of paper on Costello widened the breach between Costello and Lansky. It also served to alienate a few other brothers of the blunderworld who had backed Costello, among them Carlos Marcello who disdained publicity of all kinds now that he had become a successful and legitimate businessman.

Marcello had been brought into the syndicate by Costello, and was considered the bright boy of the combination.

Having gone legitimate, he felt no ties of loyalty to Costello.

The men who were still behind Costello had long memories, and the longest was held by Albert Anastasia who

never forgave or forgot a wrong, to himself or to a friend.

Anastasia's hatred of Little Augie Pisano never waned. Pisano had a powerful friend in Don Vito Genovese, now one of the major powers in the nation's criminal syndicate. Anastasia was as much a thorn in the side of Genovese as he was a threat to the life of Pisano.

On October 26, 1957, Anastasia walked into the barber shop of the Park Central Hotel. The name of the hotel was changed to the Park Sheraton after the shooting of Arnold Rothstein.

What occurred on this morning should have prompted the operators of the hotel to change the name again. Anastasia settled himself in a chair. "Hair-cut and shave," he told the barber.

"Sure thing, Mr. Anastasia," the barber replied. He wrapped a strip of gauze around Anastasia's neck and draped the barber cloth over the heavy-set figure. Anastasia relaxed.

At that moment, two men wearing sunglasses walked into the shop. Each held a gun in his hand. The first man jabbed the barber quickly with the muzzle of the gun. "Move!"

The barber jumped to one side with a jerky movement.

The second man put his gun to Anastasia's head. At that instant Anastasia's eyes opened.

He took in the situation at a glance, the only one he had a chance to take. His arm flew up to ward off the shots. Two slugs tore through his arm. The other gunman fired then. Anastasia stumbled from the chair. The shots came swiftly, then. One after another.

Anastasia was thrown violently against the mirrored wall, his hands and arms knocking bottles of cologne and lotion to the floor. More shots. The slugs tore into his head, his hip, and back. When he crumpled to the floor he was dead. The two men hurried out of the shop, turned left on Broadway and were lost in the crowd.

The usual investigations of the murder followed. No one could describe the gunmen, or wanted to. The investigation reached the proverbial blank wall and was dropped.

Costello had lost his most powerful friend and ally. If anyone knew the names of the killers, besides those directly involved in issuing the contract, Costello was it. Genovese? Pisano? Both in concert? It was possible.

The underworld became divided on the issue of Anastasia's death. It was a kill-

ing that had not been voted on or approved. It was a wild cowboy act. It could not go unpunished. This took a little time, but it was done.

Almost two years to the day, on September 25, 1959, Little Augie Pisano was partying at the famed New York nightclub, the Copacabana. His companion for the evening was lovely Janice Drake, wife of comic Alan Drake. Janice was one of the most attractive blondes in town. A former beauty contest winner and showgirl, she had a penchant for attracting hoods and gangsters, not just any hood but the top boys.

On this evening, Little Augie Pisano received two telephone calls. After the second call he returned to the table, took hold of Janice's arm and said, "Come on, we have to go. Important business."

It was.

For Janice Drake it proved to be the most important "business" of her life. It ended it. Janice was resplendent in a black gown, an off-the-shoulder thing that clung to her shapely figure. A stone marten stole was across her shoulders, and the white gloves she always wore on evening dates covered her graceful hands. It was 9:45 when they left the Copa.

Thirty-five minutes later Janice Drake and Little Augie

Pisano were dead. A man named Joe Alicata was having a cup of coffee in his home at 24-49 94th Street in Jackson Heights, Queens, told police later he heard what he thought were gun shots. He called the cops.

"The sounds came from across the street of my house," Alicata said to the police sergeant who took the call. He gave the sergeant his address.

In front of 24-50 95th Street, the cops found the black Caddy. It was parked halfway up the curb. In the front seat were Pisano and Janice. Two slugs had been fired into each of the victim's heads, and another bullet in each of their necks. It was obviously an underworld deed, professional, deadly, final.

Was Janice Drake a mistress of hoods? Alan Drake hotly denied it. "There was nothing clandestine in Janice's association with Pisano," Drake declared. "Janice regarded Pisano as an uncle and called him 'Uncle Gus'. That's all there was to it. She knew Pisano was giving me a boost in show business and was grateful to him as a friend."

A friend of Janice, Mrs. Barbara Wall of Los Angeles, a former member of the "Our Gang" movie children, said, "There wasn't a bad bone in Jan's body. She was trusting.

She believed everyone, saw good in everyone. Maybe that was her trouble."

Maybe.

Things went bad for Lansky in the years that followed. He had to leave the country to evade prosecution for income tax evasion. He fled to Israel. Eventually, he was forced to leave that country, was arrested in Miami when he deplaned, taken before a federal judge, and released on bail.

He was a sick old man suffering from a serious heart condition. He later had open heart surgery, and when he was well enough to stand trial on charges of skimming millions from Las Vegas casinos he was ordered to court.

The jury acquitted him. He

faces another court appearance in Las Vegas on the same charges. Chances are he will be acquitted again or he may die before he is tried.

Frank Costello is an old man. He has done too much time. He is weary, is seldom seen in public places and is out of all underworld action.

When he and Lansky pass from the picture two of the most powerful men in the National Criminal Combine, two of the sharpest minds the underworld has known, will pass with them. The trials they knew in their later years have exhausted both.

Did they think it was all worth it, all the violence, all the jail time, all the rest of it? It's hard to say.

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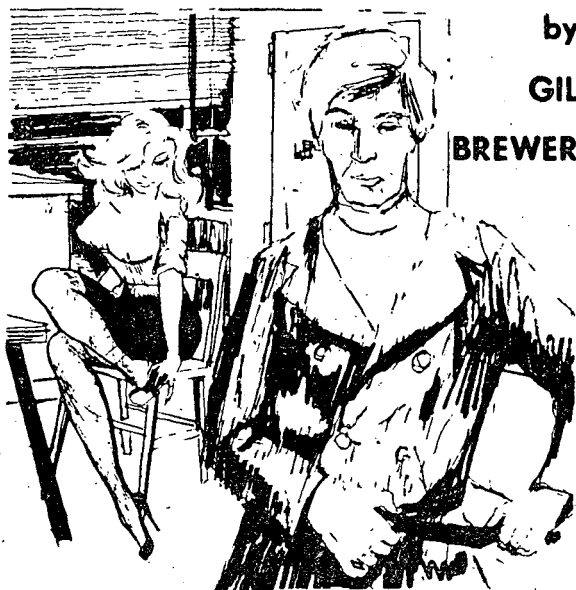
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M O T H E R



by
GIL
BREWER

She was as crooked as he was, and kept an eye open to every opportunity — until he hit her just one time too often —

PEGGY SAID, "I'm going to phone Mother. If you don't knock it off, Miles, I'll leave you flat. Get it through your head."

Miles Liveright stared at her. Peggy was a tall, willowy blonde dish, and even though she vexed him continually, he couldn't get along without her. It was a tribute to his intense nature that he loved her, or something, even though he

could hardly keep track of her affairs.

"Just close your yap," he said. "I'm trying to think."

"Don't talk to me like that."

"Doll," he said. "I'll give you a fat eye—"

"You think you're smart, don't you!"

He sat quietly in the chair. She was on the bed, one leg curled up, her mouth tight. It

was a small hotel room, with a cheap picture of a waterfall on the wall over the TV set. There was a western on the tube, but the sound was off.

Miles Liveright knew they had to do something, and quick. Money was practically nil, and the past four years promised to culminate in a hearty crunch with him in the middle, unless they caught some fast bread and skipped the country.

It had been petty crime from one end of the states to the other; gas stations, liquor stores, department store boosting, nighttime hold-ups, and lately a series of early morning housebreaks that had netted very damned little in the way of good green.

Miles' picture was in every P.O. from Providence to Pasadena, and all because of that stupid onion in Battle Creek who had put up a fuss on a dark street one night. The stupid onion cooled fast with four .32 slugs in his throat. Miles regretted that, not because of any moral sense, but because he'd been seen by a passing car, checked out, traced by the law, and almost caught in a dragnet the next morning in Jackson.

He managed to escape the net by lying on the floor in the back of the car, with Peggy driving like a wild banshee.

The entire episode had grossed him sixteen dollars.

Discouraging.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked.

"We've got to pull something big enough to get us to Rio, or Melbourne, Doll."

"H'mm."

"Aren't you scared?" he asked.

"Why should I be scared? Besides, what'd you think I was doing all morning, when I was out?"

He watched her. His long face was quite sober, the pale blue eyes slowly blinking. He had tried to follow her this morning, and she'd given him the slip.

But not before he saw her entering a drugstore with a tall, bull-shouldered, red-haired guy who owned a chin you could hang your hat on. He was obviously her latest pick-up, and when she returned to the hotel, he looked for signs. There were none. Except that she was nastier than usual.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"You promise not to hit me?"

"I'll hit you, you don't snap it up and tell me."

She lifted her chin, looking prim there on the bed.

He came out of the chair fast, made the bed in one stride, and grabbed her by the arm. "Spill

it, Doll! You want to hit the floor? And, listen, I made you with the redheaded zombie this morning. You got bruises coming, dig?"

"If you don't quit, I won't tell."

He sighed hard. "Tell what?"

"That's for you to find out."

For a long moment he stared down at her. Then he let go her arm.

Anyway, she didn't have the guts to leave him. He would beat her within an inch of her life. She knew that.

"Spill it."

"You don't deserve it. You always keep hitting me."

"Okay, I won't hit you."

She chewed her plump lower lip. "Well, there's this house over on Ogden, the north side of town. It's a Mrs. Janice Quilgen, so there. And she's loaded. Wears fat diamonds right in broad daylight. Like a dray horse, Miles. Lives in a great big joint, all alone, and she's leaving town this afternoon."

"How you know all this?"

"I overheard her talking to some guy in a jewelry store. Jesus, Miles. He says, 'What about your jewels,' just like that. She says, 'They're insured, my dear. And I'm only away for two days.' The guy, he was really shook, you could tell. That's when I got in-

terested. I knew she must have a real load in that house."

"Probably a safe."

Peggy shook her head. "That's the punch line, Elmer. The guy asked her if she'd got one yet, and she said, 'No. I'd forget the combination, darling.'"

"How you know about the house?"

"I followed her home, Miles."

"Running behind her car?"

"In a cab, pussy cat. You won't let me take the car—"

"I can't trust you as far as the bathroom."

"Go to hell."

He scratched his head.

"Does it interest you?"

"Well," he said. "You sure it looked worth it?"

"I tell you!"

"We'd have to see a fence, and that means about a third, y'know. If we're lucky, that is. I know a guy right here in town, but—"

"You're dragging, Elmer."

He scratched his head again.

"It's our chance," she said.

"We can skip for good, and make it someplace else. We'll never get out, we don't try it bigger than we have. You know that. And, Miles—it's only a question of time before some fuzz spots you."

The excitement was in him already. He knew Peggy was right. His brain skipped

around, touching here and there, searching for loopholes, and there were none. The more he considered it, the better it looked.

"But suppose she don't live alone?"

Peggy smirked. "That came out clearly. It's a set-up, I tell you."

"I don't guess you know when she's leaving?"

"She's left, Miles. It's four-thirty now. She was taking a two o'clock plane."

"Okay," he said. "We do it."

She bounced off the bed, and hugged him. "It's the big chance," she murmured against his neck. "We'll have everything we wanted."

"You won't see that red haired gee again."

She looked up at him. "Who d'you think I am?"

"I know what you are, but you're right—damned if I know who you are."

"If you don't knock it off, I'll call Mother!"

He gave her a shove and she landed on the bed.

At ten that night they parked the Fairlane a block away, walked sedately up the shadowed, rich residential street. Behind low walls, secluded mansions twinkled.

"Right here," Peggy said.

"Make a run for the side entry," Miles said, taking her

arm and thrusting her ahead.

They entered the drive, ran beneath spreading trees, and reached a side porch.

"Can you get in okay?" she asked.

"Just watch."

In two seconds they were on the porch. Ten seconds and they were in a large kitchen, touched with glints of moonlight.

"You got your gun?" Peggy whispered.

"Sure, but why would I need it?"

"I don't know. It's so creepy."

He gave a short laugh, and they went through a hall and found the stairs. "It's always the bedroom," he said. "I know about these things."

They went up the stairs. Moonlight glowed through tiny windows. On the landing, they faced an open doorway. Miles sniffed.

"Chanel," he said. "I can tell this is the one."

"We'd better check everywhere."

"Come on, stupid."

They entered the room. Moonlight cascaded in silver falls across the floor, and he saw a large bed.

Suddenly lights blazed in the room, and he was staring at a dark-haired young woman with round brown eyes. She sat up in bed.

"Who are you!" Her voice was shrill.

He stood rooted to the floor.

The young woman yelled something and began pawing in the drawer of a bedside table, her hair falling over her face.

Peggy's voice was strident. "Miles! Stop her. Your gun—"

He already had it out. At the same instant, the young woman on the bed came up with a nickel-plated revolver, and Miles Liveright fired his Savage automatic three times. Dark flowers bloomed on the young woman's white silk nightgown, and she flopped back on the bed. The revolver clattered to the floor.

In the echoing silence, he said, "Damn you, Doll. You said she was away—now look."

"Don't blame me."

He struck her with the flat of his hand. It was a powerful blow and she half fell against the wall by the door, cursing him.

"I'll phone Mother," she said.

"Just shut it, Doll."

"You got no right, Miles. Damn you."

"We better get the stuff. We can still make it."

She stared at him. "Get what you can, then. I'm going to the car."

"Okay. Have the engine running."

Her mouth was bitter. She



turned and ran from the room. He rubbed his forehead, listening to her going down the stairs.

A door slammed.

He pocketed the automatic, and began a fast search of the room. He was very excited. That he had killed somebody didn't mean much, it only loaned an aura to the extreme excitement.

He didn't have to look hard.

The jewels were in ornate boxes on a dressing table. He had never seen anything like it. Peggy was right. This broad was loaded. Brooches. Pins. Rings. Bracelets. Necklaces. Earrings. And a bag of stones;

a little leather bag with sparklers in there.

Running to the bed, he snatched off a pillow case, avoiding the dead woman. He returned to the dressing table, dumped everything into the pillow case, and got out of there fast.

Outside again, he hurried along the shadowed street.

He came to where they had parked the car.

Damn her. The street was empty, silent. No car.

He stared at the place where it had been, as if expecting it to materialize.

Peggy was gone. He knew that now. She had skipped on him. He felt a big ache commencing in the vicinity of his heart. He had taken one step too many. He shouldn't have hit her back there. He'd known she would leave someday, but this time there was a finality.

He would find her again. He had to. It was a rented car, wasn't it? Sure. Then she wouldn't leave town in that one. Too chancey.

All right. Back to the hotel, first.

He walked it. All the way, making it by alleys and side streets, keeping to the shadows.

By the time he reached his room, he was a wreck. Sweating, he stashed the pillow case under the bed, and poured him-

self a drink. He stood there sipping it, his hand trembling. He thought about the broad he'd shot. Everything was all kind of mixed up. Peggy had left him. Peggy.

As soon as he had finished his drink, he would phone the car rental agency, and check. Still, maybe she would leave the car on the street somewhere.

No telling.

He wondered if she had gone home to Mother, if that's where she was headed? The hell with it. It would take some time, but he'd locate her. He had to locate her. The first cruel nudges of desperation began to take effect, now. Without Peggy, he was nowhere.

A sharp rap on the door brought him around.

Who was that?

Then, he knew. Peggy. She'd come back. She couldn't stay away from him, could she? By God, he'd knock her flat.

Crossing the room, he unbolted the door, opened it.

The big red-haired zombie with the chin stood there looking at him.

"Mr. Liveright? Miles Liveright?"

"You. What the hell you want?"

"I'm Lieutenant Holmes, sir. May I come in?"

The big man didn't wait for

an answer, but pushed into the room, turned and grinned at Miles.

"Did you know a Miss Quilligen?" he asked. His voice was quite mild, almost neutral.

"Who—no, of course not."

"She's dead," the lieutenant said.

"Where's Peggy?"

"Peggy?" the lieutenant said, smiling. "I'm afraid I don't know anyone by that name, sir. And I'm also afraid that I must warn you, anything you say may be held against you, Mr. Liveright. Because you're under arrest for the murder of Janice Quilligen. Where's the stuff?"

"What stuff?" Miles asked shrilly. "What you talking about?" He was shaking now, inside and out. "Who the hell

are you, trying to say that I—?"

"You apparently dropped your wallet in Miss Quilligen's bedroom. There was a rental car receipt, with this address."

Miles gave a sharp curse, reaching for his back left pocket. He felt the triangle of cut cloth, the empty pocket. And he knew. It had been a set-up, all right.

"It's sad," the lieutenant said. "I knew Janice Quilligen rather well, too." He was grinning all the time he spoke.

"You and Peggy! You—" Miles couldn't say it.

"Call me Mother," Lieutenant Holmes said, still smiling. "Now, shall we get on with it?"

Call him "Mother." My God. He was a mother, all right. That was for sure.

Coming in the August Issue:

THE CASE OF THE HERTZELL INHERITANCE

A New Dramatic LUCIUS LEFFING Novelet

by JOSEPH PAYNE BRENNAN

Lucius Leffing began his investigation in his own ineffable manner—a talk with relatives of the deceased, and then a visit to the scene of the crime, so that he could better judge the case and then he found himself truly puzzled...

RIDE TO THE KILLING

by HAL ELLSON



The village was hot, the plaza scorched by the sun, and no one stirred. No one but a strangely dressed gringo, who carried a knapsack and asked only for a drink of water. A drink that brought sudden death...

NO MAN who respected himself would wear an outfit such as the stranger wore. But then he was a gringo and an odd one at that, not the usual arrogant tourist driving a car.

This one came on foot, carrying a knapsack on his back. His hair was long, he wore a beard and his ragged clothes were white with the dust of the desert. He walked into San Rafael at noon when the fire of the

sun was blistering the village and the plaza was empty.

An empty plaza and a fountain without water. The gringo stared at it and shook his head, his lips were cracked and his mouth parched. No water in the fountain, but he'd expected that. It was part of the "long journey" that had begun in Europe in a tailor's shop and nearly ended in a concentration camp. Shrugging, he went to a

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nearby bench and surveyed the plaza again.

Empty and seared by the sun, it was a distorted reflection of the whole country which had disappointed him. There was nothing here; he knew that now and closed his eyes. The silence deepened, no one appeared. The dust of the centuries lay all around; nameless Indian tribes and the Conquistadores had passed this way and left not a footprint in the chalk-white dust.

A ghost village, he thought, but now, crossing the plaza, came the sheriff, a tall and rangy man with an arrogant stride and chill green eyes. Mixed blood ran in his veins; he resented the mixture and all things strange.

The gringo looked up as the sheriff reached him and knew what was coming.

"You're from the States?"

"Yes."

"Your identification, senor."

The gringo handed over his papers. Name, Joseph Leopold; birthplace, Germany; citizen, U. S. A. The sheriff handed Leopold's papers back and asked where his car was.

"I have none. I walk, and sometimes I get a lift," the answer came.

An odd way of traveling. The sheriff frowned and asked what he was doing in San Rafael. It

was a legitimate question. After all, who stopped in this god-forsaken place?

"I'm passing through," Leopold explained, "and I thought I might get a drink from the fountain."

A water-drinking gringo, but no water in the fountain, and if there had been... "You'll get the sickness. It's better to drink beer," the sheriff advised, pointing to a cantina across the plaza.

Leopold thanked him and lifted the knapsack to his shoulder. Padding on his sandals, he made for the cantina, a bear-like man, scruffy and dirty, with a crazed look in his eyes. What kind of gringo is this? the sheriff wondered.

The beer in the cantina was warm, but what could one expect in the desert? Vargas, the owner, eyed Leopold with the same wonder as the sheriff. A crazy one, he thought. It was an accurate observation, for there was more than a touch of madness in Leopold; and no wonder, he was seeking a better world which didn't exist. Vargas could have told him that, but he only grinned. The gringo amused him!

"Another?" he said when Leopold finished the bottle.

Of hot urine? Leopold wanted to say, but he was still thirsty, the bottle no more than a burn-

ing drop. Nodding once more, he unsnapped a small change purse, and Vargas smiled, for it was a woman's thing, or a miser's, and now he wondered anew about the gringo and eyed his knapsack. It might be filled with money, for all gringos were rich.

And no good, the sheriff thought. Having followed Leopold into the cantina, he was in an ugly mood. All morning he'd been drinking mescal and his blood was boiling. Espinosa didn't like strangers nor gringos—especially not one like this dirty bearded fool who didn't look like a man.

Leopold wasn't a drinker. Four small bottles of beer were too much for him. They'd loosened his tongue and his thoughts and he saw the barman grinning at him, but that wasn't unusual. Wherever he went, people did that.

"Another?" said Vargas.

"No, I've had too much already."

"Too much? You can drink this beer all day and all night and not get drunk."

"Maybe, but I've a long way to go," Leopold said, hearing the clapping of a burro outside. The sound stopped and moments later the driver, Diego Cruz, a poor peon who gathered wood for a living, came through the door. Thin as a stick and as

shriveled as an old man, he touched the brim of his sombrero and asked for a Carta Blanca.

Vargas obliged him, marking the bottle against his name on a board behind the bar. A crude bench stood in a corner. Cruz took his bottle there and lifted it to his mouth.

Moments later two more wood-gatherers entered the cantina. Each asked for a bottle and joined Cruz on the bench. All three were from the same encampment in the desert, but they sat in silence like strangers. The barman forgot them, but Leopold saw them as outcasts and pitied them. It showed in his eyes.

Espinosa noticed and said, "You feel sorry for them, senor?"

Leopold shifted his gaze to the sheriff and nodded.

"Why, senor?" said Espinosa.

"Because they have nothing, and there are so many of them."

"Yes, so many. Our country is very poor, and that is bad, is it not?"

"Very bad."

"Which means you don't like our country."

"I didn't say that."

Espinosa came to his feet. "If you don't like our country, why did you come here? Who invited you? Who needs your pity?" He

jerked his head toward the three peons. "Not them, Senor Gringo. They may be poor, but they're men, and what are you?"

Numbed by the sudden attack, Leopold gaped at the sheriff, and the question came again. Answer it and provoke another? It was better to go; he reached for his knapsack, and the sheriff lifted a hand.

"Answer the question, gringo," he said.

Silence wouldn't work with a man like this, but how appease him? Leopold stared at Espinosa, then let it out: "I'm a man like you," he answered.

It was the wrong thing to say, and Espinosa exploded. "A man like me?" he shouted. "Do you know what you're saying?"

"I know what I'm saying."

Espinosa leaned forward, ready to strike, then caught himself and smiled. Now he measured Leopold from head to toe with a look of disgust. "Ai, look at you," he sneered. "You're disgusting. You're scum and you call yourself a man, but what man wears long hair? What man carries a change-purse?"

"A man..." Leopold began and subsided as Espinosa stepped close and shouted in his face to shut up, to listen hard or suffer the consequences.

"You know what you are," Es-

pinosa continued. "A woman. Do I make myself clear?"

Clear to Leopold was the violence in the man before him. He'd known it in others and was frightened now and no one could help him, not the mute peons and not the barman. Run, he thought, but all his life he'd been doing that.

"I asked you a question and you don't answer," Espinosa said. "Is that a denial, or are you stupid?"

It would be more than stupid to answer him. Run. Run. Run, thought Leopold, wanting to hurl himself out the door, but the way was blocked. Should he push past this bully and invite disaster?

"I'm stupid," he said. "Now let me go."

"Go where?" Espinosa shouted. "You dirty long-haired freak, you're not wanted here. Go back to where you came from. We don't need your kind." He motioned to the door.

"All right, I'm going."

"Back to where you came from, understand?"

"Yes. Yes. Yes." Leopold picked up his knapsack, sidestepped Espinosa and started for the door, but didn't reach it. He was ordered to stop and turn about. "Maybe you're not so stupid," Espinosa said.

Leopold stood mute.

"A stupid man won't admit

he's stupid. A smart man will, no?"

"Perhaps."

"And perhaps you have something in the knapsack."

"Food and. . ."

"Marihuana? It's cheap here. You take it back to the States and become rich. Ah, that's it. Let's see what's in the knapsack."

"If you wish to examine it." Leopold started to lift it from his shoulder. His quick response allayed Espinosa's suspicion, but the man stepped toward him, his face distorted by a smile that only half-concealed his anger. With a sudden movement he snatched the knapsack, flung it out the door and, as Leopold turned to retrieve it, kicked him after it.

Leopold picked himself up, lifted the knapsack to his shoulder and walked away with the laughter of Espinosa and the barman echoing in his head. The unpaved street ended where the desert began. A rutted road, baked hard by the sun, replaced it. Four-hundred yards away it dropped sharply toward a shallow stream.

Leopold paused before it. How many miles before he came to another? The sun was beating down on him, the white light almost blinding. Rocks jutted above the stream, stepping-stones to the opposite



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bank. The beer hadn't appeased Leopold's thirst, only water would, but this yellow stuff? He shrugged, stooped down, cupped it in his hands and brought it to his mouth. The water of life, he thought, and the crack of a pistol broke the desert stillness.

THE THREE PEONS, Cruz, Marquez and Sierra, who'd ordered beer in the cantina, now sat

astride their burros. The sun was hot, light dazzling; the desert road slanted downward to the stream where the bearded gringo lay sprawled in the water. In the lead, Cruz approached him first. Blood and the gringo's beard moved with the flow of the stream.

Dead, thought Cruz, dismounting from his burro. Quick hands found the gringo's purse, then reached for his knapsack and opened it, but not soon enough, for now Marquez appeared. Man and burro approached.

A glance told Marquez enough; blood in the water, the gringo dead and Cruz at his knapsack. There wasn't time for discussion. Stooping toward Cruz, he said, "I want half the gringo's money, my friend."

Cruz was about to balk, for the prize was his, but if he didn't share it, there'd be less than half for himself with Sierra fast approaching. So Cruz agreed and they divided the money, then turned to the knapsack. At that moment Sierra appeared. Appraising the scene, he came forward to demand his share from the purse.

Cruz shrugged and pointed. The purse lay open and empty. Sierra didn't argue; there wasn't time. But the knapsack—he wanted his share

from it. There wasn't much—some canned food, a book and a faded photograph of a grey-haired woman. The cans were quickly divided and, once more, the wood-gatherers went on their way.

An hour later a boy discovered Leopold's body and ran to the village to tell his father. The father hurried to the cantina and informed the sheriff. Espinosa sat at a table, his head on his arms. Red-eyed, he looked up. "A gringo?" he asked.

"Yes, señor."

Espinosa exchanged glances with the barman, shrugged and stood up, sodden with drink and in no mood to go out in the sun.

Buzzards were circling overhead, and two of the ugly carrion-eaters stood near the stream. Espinosa surveyed the scene, then picked up Leopold's empty purse. The remaining contents of the knapsack were scattered about. Two peons who'd come with Espinosa stood aside and watched him. Finally he motioned and they lifted Leopold from the stream.

Back in the village, Espinosa put through a call to police headquarters in Montes and returned to the cantina. "Ai, there's going to be trouble," said Vargas.

"What trouble?"

"They'll make a big stink about it in Montes because of the tourist business."

"Let them," Espinosa shrugged.

"You're not going to do something about it?"

"What's there to do? The gringo's dead. Who knows who killed him?" Espinosa nodded to the bottle of mescal behind the bar.

Vargas poured and said, "You shouldn't have made that call."

"Why not?" Espinosa asked, tossing off the mescal.

"They'll be on your back, asking a lot of stupid questions."

"Stupid questions, yes. But who cares about that? I don't know what happened, and they'll never know," Espinosa answered and this time poured for himself. He emptied the glass in a swallow and went to the bench where the three peons had sat.

TWO HOURS LATER Detective Victor Fiala arrived from Montes. He found the sheriff asleep on the bench and shook him awake. "Ah, a long time since we met," Espinosa said as he yawned.

"A long time, Luis."

"Too bad they sent you. There's nothing to work on."

"As usual. What happened?"

"A robbery and murder. It

didn't happen in the village, and I doubt. . ."

"Where's the body?" Fiala broke in.

"Come along."

Across the plaza in the sheriff's quarters, Fiala lifted the blanket from the corpse. The beard, long hair and features hardly suggested a tourist from the States. "Anything to identify him?" Fiala asked.

"Here's his papers."

Fiala glanced at them quickly. "All right," he said, "let's go." Without a word Espinosa led the way.

At the stream Espinosa pointed to the stepping-stones and described how he'd found Leopold. "The gringo was probably having a drink when someone came from behind and shot him."

Fiala nodded and looked around. There was only the burning desert with its scrawny vegetation, nothing else and no sign of life. What had happened here that a man should take another man's life? There was no sign that a struggle had taken place. What did that mean? Did Leopold know the killer, or was he taken by surprise in this open place?

"Let's go back," said Fiala.

"Well, what do you think?" Espinosa asked as they drove off.

"Nothing. My head is empty."

"You won't find the killer. There's nothing to go on."

"One never knows till one looks."

"You won't learn anything in the village," said Espinosa.

"I might. Leopold may have stopped in the cantina and had words with someone."

"Only with me, señor. His tongue got loose and I booted him out the door."

"Then what happened?" Fiala asked.

"He walked off."

"To his death."

Espinosa shrugged. "Somebody wanted his money, but it was no one from the village. I know the people here."

It was probably the truth. But how could Espinosa be so certain? And what if a stranger was involved? There was little chance of apprehending him. A stranger waiting by the stream who went back into the desert. No witness, and no leads, Fiala thought. Nothing but the corpse of the gringo Joseph Leopold.

The car moved into the village and stopped before the cantina. Both men got out and went inside. Vargas opened two bottles of beer. "Find anything?" he asked Fiala.

"Nothing at all."

"I didn't think you would."

"What makes you say that?"

"Well, Espinosa was there

and found nothing," Vargas said.

"True. What do you supposed happened?"

"Probably some Indio living in the desert killed the tourist."

"Perhaps," Fiala said and went to a table.

Espinosa joined him. "A little rest, then a long ride back to Montes," he said. "You wasted your time on nothing."

"It's not the first occasion and it won't be the last."

"It doesn't bother you?"

"No, I'm used to it." Fiala emptied his bottle. Vargas was readying another for him, but Fiala held up his hand and went to the door.

"One more before you leave," Espinosa said. "It's a long drive to Montes."

"I know; but I'm not going there yet."

Espinosa shrugged, and Fiala went out the door. In spite of the heat, this time he walked back to the stream. Nothing had changed there. The yellow water flowed past, while two white butterflies fluttered in courting flight above the stepping-stones and the hoof-prints in the sand. He crossed the stream and found more prints on the opposite bank where the rutted road began again.

The sun seemed hotter here, a white haze lay over the de-

sert. Nothing moved, and not even a buzzard lazed in the cloudless sky. A flame-red flower fallen from a cactus caught his eye. A burro had probably brushed it off. He picked it up. It was still fresh, so whoever had passed here. . .

Dropping the flower, Fiala gazed at the trail that led into the desert, then turned and went back to the stream. The butterflies had gone, a pair of ominous dragon-flies cruised above it.

The village was still dozing when Fiala crossed the plaza and entered the cantina. Espinosa had left. It was just as well. The fellow was useless. Vargas opened a bottle now and said, "Did you find anything?"

Fiala ignored the question. "Who else was here when the tourist dropped in?" he asked.

"Three wood-gatherers."

"You know them?"

"Yes. They live in the desert." Vargas named them and said, "You'll have a time finding them. There's no road to the place. And if you find them, I doubt if they'll tell you anything important."

"Did they have any trouble with the tourist?"

"No trouble."

"What about Espinosa?"

Vargas shrugged. "It was nothing. The gringo passed

some uncalled for remarks, and Espinosa told him to leave."

"He kicked him out, didn't he?"

Vargas flushed and splayed his hands. "As you say, senor."

"Did Espinosa follow him?"

"It wasn't necessary."

"That's not what I asked."

"No, he didn't follow him," Vargas said.

"What about the wood-gatherers?"

"They left soon after him. You think. . .?"

"I'll ask the questions. How much did they drink?"

"They're very poor—one bottle each." Vargas pointed to the debtor's board. "They couldn't pay, so I chalked it against their names."

Cruz, Marquez, Sierra. They'd followed Leopold out of the cantina. Fiala wondered why. He lifted the bottle Vargas had opened for him and said, "How do I find the wood-gatherers?"

"Go past the stream. You may find a trail. After that, it'll be up to you."

"Thanks." Fiala finished the bottle and left, squinting in the sun as he stepped outside.

The white light shimmered, the sun was hot, the village silent. He drove slowly off, left the village behind and crossed the stream. At the place where he'd found the cactus flower, he

picked up the trail of the wood-gatherers. It was clearly defined and he had no trouble following it, but where did it lead to? There was no sign of habitation, nothing but the endless desert. Coyotes and snakes might live here, but men...

A cloud of white dust billowed up behind the car and hung in the motionless air. The desert grew more arid, dry gullies wracked its surface. This was wild country here, hard on the car, and no sign of habitation—but suddenly beyond a gully, which he barely managed to cross, a group of miserable adobes came into view. It looked like the end of the earth! The adobes were crumbling and ready to fall into dust. They looked abandoned, but now a scrawny dog appeared, barked and fled and the silence of the desert came back.

Fiala waited and finally an old man stepped from a shadowed doorway. Wrinkled and white-haired, he approached the car. Fiala stepped from it, introduced himself and stated his mission. The three wood-gatherers lived here, the old man said. He would call them. He turned away, and Fiala lit a cigarette. More or less, he knew what the confrontation would be like.

Soon the three wood-gatherers appeared, small men, lean to the point of emaciation. Cruz, Marquez and Sierra, each a reflection of the other; they doffed their sombreros and bowed. Fiala explained the reason for his visit and asked for their co-operation. Their response was as expected. They simply stared at him and waited for him to continue.

Now he addressed himself to Cruz. Had he stopped earlier at the cantina in San Rafael? Cruz nodded. He'd had one beer and left the cantina after the tourist had gone, but he hadn't followed him. Yes, he'd watered his burro at the stream, but he hadn't seen the tourist there. He smiled nervously.

An outrageous lie, but Fiala shrugged and turned to Marquez. Asking the same questions, he received the same answers. Likewise with Sierra. The three peons knew nothing. Thanking them, Fiala climbed into his car and turned about. Mute, the three wood-gatherers watched him as he drove off across the desert.

VARGAS LOOKED up as Fiala stepped through the cantina door. Another man stood at the bar, but didn't turn. He'd been drinking mescal. Emptying his glass in a swallow now, he turned and made for the

door—an angry man and ready to explode.

Fiala stepped out of his way and looked at Vargas. "What's bothering him?" he asked.

"Who knows? He drinks too much, that's all. How did you make out in the desert?"

"I didn't."

"You couldn't find the wood-gatherers?"

"I found them, but they knew nothing."

"Those fellows never do."

"What can you tell me about them?" Fiala asked.

"What's there to tell? They've been coming here for years. They have a drink and go. They never make trouble."

Fiala nodded. He'd come a long way and learned nothing. Was it his age? he wondered. He was getting on, slipping badly of late, his brain didn't work any more, he knew. These thoughts depressed him.

Worse, he knew what to expect when he got back to Montes, a thorough chewing out by Lopez. A murdered tourist, that was bad enough, but not have the slightest inkling of who and why he'd been murdered? The newspapers would make something of that, and anything they got onto would rouse the natural tyrant in the Chief.

Well, let him rant. I don't care any more, Fiala thought,



CAPTAIN MEZA

and he asked for a bottle. When it came, he emptied it in two pulls, put his money on the bar and started for the door.

"Going back to Montes?" Vargas asked.

"Where else? I can't do anything here."

"Then you're dropping the matter?"

"What else can I do? I've nothing to work on."

"That's right. You can't get blood from a stone."

"You can't get anything from a stone, unless it hits you in the head," Fiala answered and went out the door.

It was late afternoon now and nothing had changed. It was still hot, the plaza empty, the village silent as a tomb. A good place for an old man to rest in, but otherwise...

Fiala got into the car, drove off and the morbid thoughts returned. He was getting old, the job more difficult—and look what had happened here. He hadn't been able to put anything together.

I'm not doing my job. I can't do it any more, he thought, and gunned the motor. The big car leaped forward, the village dropped behind, desert opened before him, the wilderness again and the empty road that led where? Back into time, to the "beginning", to youth? The car plunged on faster and faster and the desert began to blur; he had no eye for it now. The car was shuddering, as if ready to take flight or explode. Let it. Let it, he thought, and, if it didn't, the quicker the better his meeting with the Chief. A cloud of dust stretched across the desert as the car roared on.

At any other time, sober or not, Fiala would have slowed his pace on entering Montes, but now he was beyond himself and the car raced through the city directly to the main plaza. The heat of the day having gone, strollers and bench-sitters were out in number. Accustomed to wild drivers who occasionally raced around the plaza, they weren't prepared for Fiala.

Hitting the plaza with a roar, his car whipped past the Cathedral and all heads turned.

Tires screeched at the first sharp corner where a small hotel stood. Alarmed, the doorman jumped inside and the car swept past, raced on to the next corner, turned it miraculously and roared through the next two lengths of the plaza, then screamed into a narrow street siding headquarters and braked in front of the Black Cat.

The sound of brakes announced his arrival and all heads turned as he came through the side-door of the cantina. Greetings went unanswered; even Pancho, the proprietor, got the cold-shoulder, but he knew the signs, poured his best tequila, set a bottle of Carta Blanca for a chaser and turned to other things. Three boilermakers later Pancho came back and leaned over the bar.

"Trouble, Victor?" he said.

"No."

"Don't give me that."

"All right. This happens to be a celebration. I'm handing in my resignation."

"You're joking."

"I was never more serious."

"Did the Chief...?"

"Lopez has nothing to do with it," Fiala interrupted. "I'm getting too old for the job."

"We all get old, but we don't quit."

"Never mind the philosophy.

Just keep the drinks coming."

Pancho shrugged and kept them coming till closing time. When his other patrons left, he locked the door and turned to Fiala. "You're staying?" he asked.

"If you don't mind."

Pancho shrugged and went behind the bar. "Ai, we're both getting old. Shall we drink on that?"

Two hours later the side-door opened and closed. The two "old men" climbed into the car and drove to the Blue Moon restaurant. Black coffee didn't help; they fell asleep at a table.

At dawn Fiala awoke with the taste of ash in his mouth and his head aching. Glancing at Pancho, he thought of waking him but didn't and walked out the door into the clamor of morning, for Montes was a city of early risers, though Chief Lopez was not one of the legion.

Late hours, late breakfasts and late to work, the perogatives of the mighty. Let him sleep, Fiala thought, and taking advantage of the cool morning air, walked home.

"So the Devil himself arrives," his daughter snapped as he entered the kitchen. "Where were you all night?"

"No questions, please. I'm not in the mood, Aurora."

"I can see you're not. Drinking all night now. . ."

"Quiet, my little one. I don't need a lecture, but I do need a clean shirt. I hope you have one ready?"

"As if you have to ask."

"Good. And breakfast?"

"If you'll sit at the table."

"When I shower and change."

Following breakfast, Fiala stepped into the patio, lit up and sat under the avacado. The taste of ash had gone from his mouth, his head was no longer thumping. In fact, he felt fine. The tequila had banished yesterday's morbid thoughts and cleared his mind. No anger was left inside him. So I'm old. So what? he thought, and shrugged.

Later, Aurora stepped to the screen-door and asked him when he expected to go to work.

"Never," he answered.

"Never's a long time."

"A long, long time."

Too long, she thought, and frowned. Something had happened yesterday and last night. About to question her father, he caught the look in her eyes and said, "It's very simple. I'm quitting my job."

"What did you say?"

"You heard me. Now no more questions and, while you're there, you may as well bring me a cold bottle of beer."

"After drinking all night?"

"A very cold bottle, Aurora."

In the natural order of things, a father commands and a daughter complies. Aurora complied, then retreated to the kitchen and watched her father from behind the screen-door. She'd never seen him quite like this. More grey showed in his hair, and the creases in his face were deeper than ever, yet there was no sign of last night's drinking bout. In fact, he looked like the father she'd known a decade ago.

Now he lifted the bottle, put it down and listened. In a tall palm beyond the patio wall a mourning dove gave voice to a soft lament. The earth's saddest sound and its sweetest, Fiala thought, and looked at his watch. In a little while he'd meet with Lopez and all would be over. The dove in the palm was still grieving, and the morning was flying.

LOPEZ was later than usual. Noon broke before he appeared at headquarters. Fiala awaited him on the high balcony. They greeted each other and entered the office. Lopez lit up. He appeared in a good mood. Was it because he'd met a new lady-friend last night, or hadn't he read the papers?

"Something seems to be bothering you, Victor," he said. "What is it?"

"I'm quitting the job."

"Ah, today you're amusing. What else is funny?"

"Nothing, senor. I meant what I said."

"Well—you are serious. What happened?"

"I can't do the work any more."

"You mean you didn't find the one who murdered the tourist?" Lopez shrugged. "Such things happen."

"Not with a simple one like this."

"Perhaps it's not as simple as you think. And you're probably tired. Take a week off, two if you like. I'm not accepting your resignation."

"But..."

"I'll put Captain Meza on the case," Lopez said.

"Ai, that one."

"A good man."

"A real bumbler."

"That shouldn't bother you, or does it?"

"No. Let him take over."

"Good."

Captain Meza who was always too quick on the draw. Things would happen fast now. Someone would go to prison, even if innocent. But what did it matter? Fiala shrugged and went to the door.

"One week off, or two?" Lopez grinned. "Or do you insist on quitting?"

"Make it a week," Fiala answered and opened the door.

Ten minutes later Captain Meza and two of his men set off for San Rafael in a jeep. Arriving at the village, Meza looked up Espinosa and the sheriff gave him the brief facts as he knew them.

"Shortly after the tourist left the cantina a boy discovered his body at the stream outside the village. Three wood-gatherers were in the cantina. As soon as the tourist left, they followed him out. That's it," he said.

"You think the wood-gatherers might have killed the tourist?" Meza asked.

"No, but..."

"But what?"

"They crossed the stream where the tourist was found, and yet they claim they didn't see him, dead or alive."

"And you think they did?"

"I say they had to see him."

"Then they lied, but why?"

"Who knows? Perhaps they know the killer."

"You're saying they witnessed the murder," Meza states.

"They were close enough, and the killer couldn't hide. It's open country, so they had to see him."

"But they saw no one," Meza nodded, "because there was no one there but themselves. Which means one of them murdered the tourist."

Espinosa shrugged. "What

else can one think, but there's no proof, and they're pretty good guys. They've never given any trouble."

"Not until now, at least. Where can I find them?" Meza insisted.

"In the desert. I'll take you there, senor."

In the white heat of noon the adobes looked forlorn and deserted, and not even the scrawny dog appeared as Meza, his two men and Espinosa approached on foot. Twenty paces from the adobes Meza stopped and raised his hand. Which ones housed the three wood-gatherers, he wanted to know. Espinosa pointed them out—"Cruz, Marquez, Sierra."

In his crumbling adobe, Cruz lay on his side on a straw mat. He was breathing heavily and saliva dripped from his mouth. Meza toed him with his boot, but he didn't stir. "Drunk," said Espinosa. A kick in the ribs opened the wood-gatherer's eyes. "Go away," Cruz moaned and promptly closed his eyes, but not for long. Meza, pressing his pistol against the prone man's temple, said, "Get up, vermin."

Cruz obeyed as best he could, and the inquisition began. Meza was brief and brutal, but his questions elicited no answers, which was to be expected, for these people never talked.

"We'll be back and perhaps this will help you remember what happened to the tourist," Meza said and his pistol crashed down on Cruz' head.

Marquez, his wife and two children were asleep on the floor when Meza led the way into the next adobe. The women and children awoke. Meza ordered them to leave; they left without a word, and now there was only Marquez, a wisp of a man with hollow cheeks and rotted teeth. His mouth gaped open, his snores rasped. Drunk, Meza's boot didn't move him; neither did his pistol.

Angry now, he ordered his men to lift the woodgatherer. It was routine with them. Lifting Marquez, they held him against the wall and Meza slapped him across the face with the back of his hand. Six hard blows had no effect. Marquez didn't come to:

"Let the pig go," Meza said in disgust, and Marquez crumpled to the floor.

Sierra stirred and opened his eyes when the lawmen entered his adobe. He hadn't been drinking and knew he was in for trouble. Sitting up, he stared at his visitors. Let them speak. The last word is always theirs, so let them have the first, he thought, and Meza signaled him to rise. He was

ready to question him when he noticed a can beside the palette Sierra had been lying on.

"Let me have that," Meza said.

Sierra handed it to him.

"Where did you get this?" Meza asked.

"I found it."

"Where?"

"On the road close to San Rafael."

"Sure, you did," Meza answered sarcastically and he crossed the room. Another can sat on a crude table. He examined it and said, "You also found this one on the road?"

"Yes, senor."

"A likely story. You took it from the tourist's knapsack after you murdered him."

"No, senor. I..." Sierra's eyes went to Espinosa in a plea for help, but the sheriff's face was stone.

"Come along," Meza said. His whole manner had changed, for he had his man. Sierra, with lowered head, stepped outside. The jeep awaited him and the lockup in Montes with its bars of wood where his "trial" and interrogation would truly begin. He knew what would happen there; the two cans of beans had doomed him.

The Black Cat was empty but for Detective Fiala. He'd opened the door late that morning with Pancho and had his

first boiler-maker before the stout one could light a cigarette.

"So you tried to quit and Lopez wouldn't allow it," Pancho finally said. "I could have told you that. It wasn't the right approach. He wanted the satisfaction of firing you."

"I wouldn't put that past him," Fiala answered. "Ai, now I'm stuck with the job. A week off to straighten myself out."

"At the rate you're going you won't succeed."

"No sermons, please."

"It's for your own good."

"I appreciate the thought, but I don't need any help."

"You may. Your friend Meza got the jump on you."

"Meaning what?" Fiala asked.

"He found the man who murdered the tourist."

"Who's the man?"

"A wood-gatherer, Jose Sierra. The fellow admitted to the crime."

"Sure, after Meza worked him over."

"Then you think he got the wrong man?"

Nodding, Fiala stood up. "The vacation's over, Pancho," he said. "I'm going to have a word with Sierra."

A word with Sierra, but first with the Chief. Lopez wasn't in the least surprised when Fiala

entered his office. "Back already?" he said with a grin.

"To cancel my vacation, with your permission, of course."

"That's up to you, but what's the hurry? Meza nabbed the murderer."

"The right man? I doubt it."



"Doubt isn't enough. See the Captain. If he has the wrong man, you'd better come up with the right one."

"Fair enough." Fiala left and confronted Meza at his desk.

"Back on duty?" the Captain grinned. "I thought you were put out to pasture."

"A misconception on your part."

"Forgive the error, I suppose you heard the news?"

"If one can call it that."

"Ah, you sound like you've a bone to pick."

"More or less. You've got the wrong man, Captain."

"He admitted his guilt."

"Under what circumstances?"

"A little persuasion goes a long way," Meza said.

"And makes a man say what he doesn't want to say. I'm going to have a talk with Sierra."

"As you wish, but it won't help."

The lockup was small, with space enough for one man, but sometimes a half-dozen men were confined there, with a wooden bench to squat on, wooden bars to stare through and nothing else. It was a proper cage for an animal, but it harbored Jose Sierra. The wood-gatherer looked up as the door opened and his expression didn't change.

"So we meet again," Fiala said, shaking his head. "Too bad. What happened?"

"You know what happened, senor."

"Captain Meza claims you murdered the tourist. Why?"

"Because he found two cans of beans in my house that belonged to the tourist."

"Which doesn't say you killed the man, but you admitted the same. Why?"

Sierra shrugged. No doubt Meza had forced a confession from him, but was he guilty? And what of Cruz and Marquez? "Your two friends?" Fiala asked. "Why didn't the Captain accuse them? They left the cantina ahead of you."

Silence from Sierra.

"They were at the stream before you arrived," Fiala went on. "They found the tourist dead, didn't they?"

"Yes, but none of us murdered him."

"But you robbed him?"

"Yes, senor."

"Why?"

"Because he had no use for anything."

"Two cans of beans for each of you and some money. Look at the trouble it caused."

"I didn't share the money."

"The one who murdered him got it?"

"No, my friends did."

"How do you know that?" Fiala asked.

"Because they've been drunk ever since. Like pigs. Swilling tequila like water when they can barely afford beer."

"Perhaps they didn't share with you because they killed the tourist," Fiala said.

"No. They were still moving toward the stream when I heard the shot."

"Then perhaps you saw the killer."

"No, the stream is below the road."

"Cruz and Marquez were ahead of you. Perhaps they saw him?"

Sierra shrugged and stood up. "What does it matter what they saw or didn't see? I'm the

killer according to Captain Meza."

"Only according to him."

"There's nothing you can do about it, senor. Have you a cigarette?"

Fiala handed him his pack and Sierra lit up, then went back to the bench, stretched out on it and closed his eyes. He was finished talking.

Fiala let him be and left. Avoiding Meza, he stepped out of headquarters and crossed the plaza to the Blue Moon. A quick cup of black coffee and he climbed into his car.

Soon he was out of Montes, speeding across the desert toward San Rafael and humming to himself. Things were a little clearer now. Sierra had told the truth, he was sure, but not all of it. The man knew more. Why wouldn't he let it out? Why was he willing to go to prison?

Shadows were encroaching from the mountains across the desert as Fiala drove into San Rafael. As always, the plaza was empty and the village appeared to be deserted. Stopping at the cantina, he went in, surprising Vargas. "I didn't expect to see you," he said.

"Well, I'm back. I'll have an Indio."

Vargas opened a bottle. "So Meza caught the killer," he remarked.

"He did?"

"You didn't know, senor?"

"No, I haven't been working."

"It was Sierra, one of the wood-gatherers you questioned."

"Do you think he did it?"

Fiala snapped the question at Vargas, and the barman looked surprised. "Meza didn't arrest him for nothing," he answered.

"And what do the people in San Rafael think?"

"They're glad Sierra was caught, of course."

"What about his two friends, Cruz and Marquez?"

"Who knows what they think? They never have much to say."

"They've been here?"

Vargas hesitated, then nodded. "They have."

"They've been drinking a lot?"

"No more than usual."

Fiala finished the Indio, set down the bottle and walked to the door. "Where's Espinosa?" he asked.

"At his house."

"And probably in his cups." Stepping out the door, Fiala got into his car and drove to the stream where the murder had taken place.

Again, he looked around, then headed into the desert. Darkness caught him before he reached the adobes, it fell like a blanket and the desert vanished. With headlights blazing,

he picked up the burro trail.

A half-hour later the lights glared against the walls of the primitive adobes. A dog barked briefly and was silenced. Stepping from the car, Fiala walked in front of the headlights and waited. The adobes were silent. No one appeared.

They're frightened, and I might get a bullet, he thought, and walked to the adobe occupied by Marquez. The door was closed. Pushing it open, he pplied his flashlight and the beam captured the face of a woman. Her eyes brimming with fear, she stared back at him while a child stirred under a black shawl. Fiala asked for Marquez.

"He's gone," said the woman. "I don't know where."

A lie to protect her man, Fiala thought, and left. Going to Cruz' door, he pushed it in. A candle flickered on a table, light gleamed from a bottle; beyond it, eyes glazed with tequila, sat Marquez. His partner, Cruz, lay snoring on the floor.

Marquez blinked and finally nodded to Fiala, then raised the bottle and offered it to him. Fiala hesitated, but the night was already growing chill. Accepting the bottle, he raised it.

"A drink to the dead tourist," Fiala toasted.

Marquez was staring at him

when he lowered the bottle. The fellow looked frightened. All to the good. Fiala rubbed it in now, hard.

"How many bottles did you buy with the tourist's money?" he asked. "You and Cruz, I mean? Ah, but you were lucky. Look what happened to Sierra. All he got was two cans of beans and for that he's going to prison to rot, while you and Cruz get away with it. You split the money between you, and put Captain Meza onto Sierra."

"No, Senor."

"But you took the money from the dead man."

"No."

"You're lying. How many bottles of tequila did you buy? You don't know. The windfall was too much for you, wasn't it? You settled your beer bill in the cantina and started on the stronger stuff which you couldn't afford before. Isn't that right?"

"We didn't kill the gringo," Marquez answered.

"But you took his money."

"Only because he was dead."

"Then someone else killed him?"

"Someone else."

"But you followed the tourist out of the cantina." Fiala pressed the man.

"We were going home."

"And you heard a shot."

"Yes, we heard it señor."

"Then you must have seen the killer."

"No. I was behind Cruz. I didn't see what happened at the stream."

Fiala turned to Cruz, shook him awake and began to question him. He was less responsive than Marquez, more frightened. "And you heard the shot that killed the tourist?" Fiala suddenly put in.

"I heard it, but I saw nothing."

"Not according to Marquez," Fiala pressed.

"I saw nothing."

"You're not blind."

"I saw nothing."

Fiala let out his breath. "You're lying. Both of you are liars. Whether you heard the shot or not, whether you witnessed the shooting or not, you saw the killer and know who he is because there was no place for him to hide."

"I saw nothing," Cruz repeated, but Fiala felt him weakening and pounced. "Your friend Sierra is in the lockup," he shouted. "He'll be going to prison for the rest of his life. Do you realize that?"

Cruz sat mute, his dark eyes flooded with guilt. "Did Sierra kill the tourist?" Fiala went on.

"No, señor."

"How do you know that? You said you didn't see the killer."

Cruz hesitated, then said, "Sierra was behind me."

"Correct. So he couldn't have killed the tourist but, still, he's going to prison because the two of you know nothing."

Marquez hung his head, and Cruz picked nervously at a thread on his trousers. "There's nothing we can do," he finally said.

"You're wrong. Do you think Meza won't be back? Do you think he won't get more out of Sierra? He'll make him talk, if he doesn't decide to himself; and you'll be thrown in the lock-up while Meza and his men work you over. Then off to prison you'll go."

This was a frightening possibility, but they would not name the killer, and Fiala shook his head. How could he bring them to their senses? Once more he tried. "What about the horse?" he asked.

Both men looked at him, startled. "The killer rode a horse. You couldn't have missed seeing him," Fiala said.

Glances were exchanged, then Cruz shook his head. "We saw no horseman, señor."

"But one was there. Yes, the killer came on horseback, did his job, watered the horse, then returned to the village, passing you on the way."

The two men looked numb-struck now, but Fiala wasn't

finished. "He passed and warned you not to talk. Now do you want to name him, or should I?"

Cruz stared at the floor, avoiding Fiala's gaze, but Marquez shrugged and gave in. "The killer was Espinosa," he admitted. "But what could we do? The man is mad. You don't know him. He said he'd kill us if we talked."

"Three men and you let him frighten you."

"Because of our wives and children. Who'd take care of them if something happened to us?"

"Something may still happen unless you speak out."

"Who will believe us if we do? Captain Meza? No, señor. We're poor peons, then we'll be dead ones."

There was some truth in this. For, if only out of embarrassment, Meza would hardly believe them, but Fiala persisted.

"If Vargas will agree to talk, we can nail Espinosa," he said.

"But what can he say against the sheriff?"

"He knows Espinosa followed the tourist from the Cantina. His word on that will be enough."

"But Vargas will never admit to that."

"Perhaps I can persuade him. If I do, you'll bear witness against Espinosa?"

Marquez agreed with reluctance. Cruz was slower to respond, but finally he conceded.

Fiala stepped into the night. Beyond the glowing headlights of his car all was black and quiet. The desert slumbered, the air was growing chill. Shivering, he looked up at the vast black sky, and far across the desert a coyote yapped its loneliness. Shivering again, he walked to his car on unsteady legs.

The drive back to the village seemed like an endless nightmare. There wasn't a light to be seen when he reached it, and the cantina was closed. Should he wake Vargas? Better wait till morning and do it right, for the fellow wouldn't be easy. Nothing is any more, he thought, and prepared to drive back to Montes, then quelled at the idea of returning in the morning. He could sleep in the car.

Climbing into the back, he quickly fell asleep.

AT DAWN the clapping of a burro brought Victor Fiala awake. A grizzled old man astride the brute lifted his sombrero in greeting and went his way. Promptly Fiala closed his eyes again. At nine he got out of the car and circled the plaza, then sat on a bench. At ten Vargas opened shop and Fiala

followed him in. The barman sent him an odd look.

"Back again?" Vargas said.

"I didn't leave."

"What happened?"

"I slept in my car. I've been waiting for you."

"Ah, you need a quick one."

"No. Sit down. We're going to have a little talk about the murder." Sleep had helped Fiala. Vargas would have to do the worrying, and he was worried when he sat down.

"Why do you wish to discuss the murder with me?" the barman asked.

"We'll get to that soon enough. Cigarette?" Fiala smiled. He was beginning to feel cocky, and Vargas, he could see, was nervous. A good sign. At the proper moment he'd crack like an egg. Now he accepted the cigarette and a light and sat back, folding his arms across his chest.

Fiala tossed him the first question. It seemed almost innocent. "How much tequila have you sold to Cruz and Marquez?" he asked.

"Not much."

"What does that mean?"

"Perhaps a glass a day."

"Since the murder?"

"That's right."

"And before that?"

"About the same."

Fiala shook his head. "You're lying on both counts. They



could barely pay you for the beer they drank until the tourist was murdered. Then you sold them tequila by the bottle. They used the money they took from the tourist, and you were aware of that."

"No, señor."

"Another lie."

"Are you trying to implicate me in something I know nothing about?" Vargas asked.

"You've already implicated yourself."

"Really? You'd better explain."

"First things first. If we clear that hurdle, we'll forget your predicament. Now the day the tourist was murdered, Espinosa had a dispute with him in here. He kicked him out, then went after him."

"No, señor."

"The three wood-gatherers say he did."

"If they said that, they lied." Vargas shifted in his chair uneasily.

"For what reason?"

"Who knows? They're ignorant peons. They might say anything."

"They spoke the truth, Vargas, and it's you who are ignorant. Also, you're a coward. You're afraid of Espinosa."

"I fear no man."

"Then you'll speak out?"

"I have nothing to say." Vargas stood up and turned to the

bar. "A drink before you leave?"

"Better pour one for yourself. You're going to need it," Fiala said coldly.

Vargas paled. Fiala's gun was pointing at him. "What are you doing?" the barman gasped.

"Taking you with me. My car's outside. A drink before we leave?"

Shaking, Vargas poured for both of them.

It was a long way to Montes, but a good road crossed the desert. The car flew, and the miles melted away. No word passed between the two men. At noon the car, white with dust, roared out of the desert like a ghost and entered the city. Stopping before headquarters, Fiala nodded to a door in the shadow of the arcade.

"Captain Meza's nest," he casually remarked.

"You're taking me in there?"

"Are you ready to talk?"

"I've nothing to say."

Fiala shrugged and drove off. Silence between the two men, and the car swung into a broad highway line with royal palms. The highway led out of the city and into the desert north of the city. Suddenly Fiala cut away from it into a rough road that snaked through the desert to a woebegone area—the dump with its garbage and stink. Here and there smoldering fires

sent up columns of black smoke into the stilled air.

The car halted and a buzzard sailed over it. There were dozens of them lazing over the dump, and more on the festering piles of refuse.

"Why are you stopping here?" Vargas asked uneasily.

"It's not a pretty site, is it?"

"That's no answer."

"You're right," Fiala said and pointed at a group of buzzards tearing the remains of a small animal. "Ugly as sin, those fellows, but very efficient. And look at the big one digging in. He must be the boss."

"You came here to watch those filthy things?"

"No, I wanted you to see them."

"If you think they amuse me..." Vargas hesitated, didn't finish the sentence.

"Hardly that. You see, they're to remind you to be careful of Cruz and Marquez. They expect you to cooperate. If you don't, they intend to drag you into the desert and leave you to the buzzards after they're done with you."

"They told you that?"

"In so many words," Fiala replied, lying in his teeth. "Shall we go?"

"Where to?"

"Headquarters, to testify."

"And if I refuse?"

Fiala shrugged and drove off

again, not back to the city but farther into the desert to an area where even the cacti was stunted and scarce.

"The earth's end," he remarked, and some minutes later when the bleak walls of the State penitentiary loomed up ahead: "The end of all hope."

Puzzled, Vargas said nothing, and the car moved on to within a hundred yards of the prison and stopped. "It's not good to get too close," said Fiala. "Those guards up on the wall have machine-guns and nervous fingers."

Silence from Vargas, and sweat running from him. "You're wondering why we're here?" said Fiala. "Any questions?"

"No questions."

"All right, but let me tell you about the prison. See that big door? Step through there and you step into Hell. It's simple to enter, hard to get out. Break the law and who's going to help you?"

"I've broken no law," said Vargas.

"You're protecting a murderer, but let me remind you of Captain Meza. He'll work you over with his men."

"He has no reason to."

"Cruz and Marquez will see to that."

Sweat glazed Vargas' face,

his eyes were focused on the prison door. He was trembling and at the breaking point. His breath escaped him and he broke. "All right, take me to headquarters," he said. "I'm ready to talk."

CAPTAIN MEZA was embarrassed by the turn in events. A mistake had been made. He did what he had to do! He released Sierra and drove with two of his men to the desert settlement where Cruz and Marquez gave their story. A half-hour later in San Rafael he picked up the sheriff. There was no trouble. Espinosa was dead-drunk and didn't know what was happening. Meza's men dumped him in the jeep. The lockup in Montes awaited him.

Back at headquarters Chief Lopez congratulated Fiala. But one thing he wanted to know, how had he managed to turn things about and crack the case?

"It was a horse that did it,"

Fiala told Chief Lopez dryly.

"You're joking," said Lopez.

"Not at all, senor. Cruz and Marquez might not have talked if Espinosa hadn't gunned down the tourist from his horse."

"I'm afraid you've lost me, Victor."

"It's simple enough. The tourist was killed at the stream, and there were fresh hoof-prints of a horse in the sand. Besides the peons on their burros, that meant a fourth party had been at the scene, but the peons wouldn't admit to that till I said that the killer rode a horse."

"Which made them think you knew more than you did?"

"Right."

"But what made you think Espinosa was the killer?" asked Lopez.

Fiala shrugged. "I gambled," he said. "It was desperation, I suppose; and Espinosa's laziness. Knowing him, I assumed he'd ride to a killing rather than walk."

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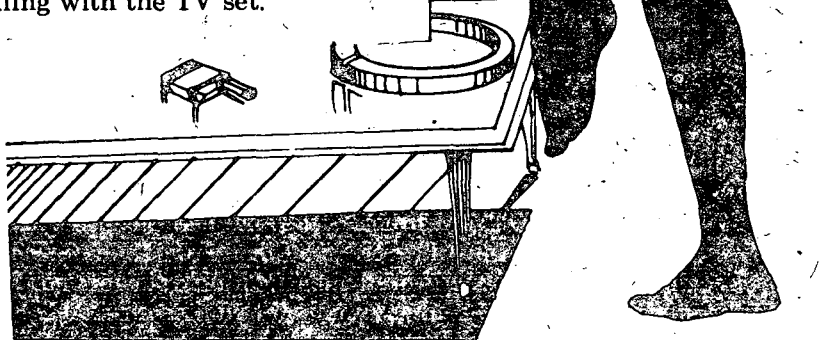
THE JURY CAPER

The man across the room nodded grimly, and suddenly Eddie remembered: when you buy a guy's life—somebody has to be paid back...

by

TALMAGE POWELL

WHILE CLARA tidied the dinette and did the dinner dishes, Eddie passed the minutes restlessly in her small living room, pacing the carpet, fiddling with the TV set.



When he heard her closing cabinet doors in the kitchenette, he settled into the large orange-colored armchair, feigning an air of well-fed contentment that masked the out-of-sight idea churning in his mind.

With his superficial good looks, curly black hair styled long about his ears, slender body clothed in carefully coordinated brown-tan-gold, Eddie was a good imitation of a fashion advertisement depicting a young executive taking his ease. The fact is, he spent a lot of time studying the ads, then picking with ferret determination through the cut-rate and chain stores when he had to buy a shirt, tie, jacket, shoes, or suit.

Clara came in, palming a stray wisp of dull brown hair from her forehead. Eddie turned his head, looking up and hitting her with the Bailey special smile, glint of white teeth, a crinkling at the corners of sooty-lashed eyes.

It worked as always.

Clara pinked with pleasure as he took her hand and drew her down on his lap. She was plain, but not a real dog, Eddie reflected. The lack-luster hair set the tone for the rest of her. Ordinary face and figure. Dull brown personality. Sum total: not unpleasant, just blah. A

shy, lonely, affection-starved working girl.

But she was a cool cook, and her apartment was always open when there was no place else to spend an evening. Her eagerness to please him sometimes annoyed Eddie. Still, it was nice to receive golf clubs and Swedish sweaters for presents and to know she would always override his protests about accepting loans from her.

He slipped his arms about her waist.

"Was the dinner okay, Eddie?"

"The greatest." His lips nuzzled her neck, bringing a shivery little sigh from her. She wriggled comfortably in his lap, resting her head against his shoulder.

He let her have a moment of idyllic contentment; then he murmured against her hair, "Kitten, I'm darn tired of not being able to give you things."

"You're all I want, Eddie."

"See what I mean? Girl like you, you rate the best. I want us to play on the sand at Miami Beach. Dine at Antoine's. Shop for a bauble in a Parisian shop."

She raised slightly and looked at him, their eyes inches apart. "What are you talking about, Eddie?"

"You and me, baby." He kissed her quite suddenly, feeling

her response of passionate longing. His own mind was more concerned with the immediate future than with this moment. Clara's job in the courthouse hadn't interested him, except as an incidental source of bread—until the recent murder of a girl named Nancy Chavez.

He broke the kiss lingeringly. "We can have all those things, Kitten, everything we've dreamed of, and we don't have to necessarily rob a bank to do it."

"How, Eddie?"

"You just make sure I'm on the jury when the Chavez case comes to trial. I'll take care of everything else, and when the trial is over we'll have so much bread you'll think I've printed the stuff, believe me."

She drew back, but not much. "I don't understand, Eddie."

"It's simple. You've told me about your job and how the jury setup works in this state. First, a list of jurors is summoned, making up a jury pool. From this pool the jury clerk makes up the lists that will act as juries in the civil and criminal cases scheduled for trial in the courthouse before the various judges."

"That's about the way it works," she said. "but I still don't see—"

"Who is the jury clerk, Kitten? Who handles the papers,

keeps the records, draws the jury lists from the pool?"

"I do, Eddie. You know that."

"So I'm volunteering, baby, for a duty that most citizens try to duck. You add my name to the pool. Then you make sure I'm included in the jury for the Chavez trial. After that, who knows? Maybe a honeymoon to Hawaii."

"Oh, Eddie!" A sob of happiness filled her throat. "Did I hear you say honeymoon?"

"Your ears don't lie, Kitten." He bruised her lips with a Bailey special. He knew he'd overrun the first objective. He was as good as sitting in the jury box already, hearing the indictment read against young Richie Wood for the murder of Nancy Chavez.

Eddie escaped. Clara shortly before midnight. Instead of going directly home, he tooled his Toyota sports crosstown to a modestly fashionable apartment building. He thumbed the communicator button in the lobby half a dozen times before he admitted to himself that Joella Marlowe wasn't home.

He gritted his teeth, glowered about the small empty lobby. Often when he had to take Clara in his arms, his mind would displace her with the lovely blonde image of Joella. Right now, he was stung with the thought of Joella liv-

ing it up with some well-heeled creep while he'd had to make the scene with Clara.

Okay, Joella baby, he thought as he kicked the lobby door open, but you'll be singing Eddie-boy's tune. . .

The next morning at ten o'clock Eddie was in a corner booth in a downtown bar and grill. He drank coffee in nervous sips, his eyes riveted to the front door. Now and then he blotted his forehead with a purple-hued handkerchief.

The back-bar clock registered ten-fifteen when Baxter Wood appeared in the doorway and paused to look the bar over. Eddie recognized him instantly, from pictures splashed on television and front pages when Nancy Chavez was murdered.

Eddie stumbled in his haste to get out of the booth. He hurried over to the multi-millionaire plastics manufacturer.

"Mr. Baxter Wood?"

"Yes." The word was a guttural. Even in a cashmere suit and twenty-dollar necktie, Baxter Wood struck Eddie as a character who would be right at home in a lumber camp. The guy had a blunt, square face topped with a style-scorning crewcut the color of iron.

"I'm Eddie Bailey, Mr. Wood, the fellow who phoned you earlier this morning and suggested

a meeting." Eddie was sweating only a little. "Not many people in here this time of day. We can have all the privacy we need over there in that corner booth."

When they were seated, facing each other, Baxter Wood waved the waitress away and folded his hands on the tabletop; they looked like sledgehammers.

"Okay, bub," Wood rumbled in that bullfrog basso, "what's it all about? You said enough on the phone to get me over here. Let's hear the rap."

"I got this idea from statements you made to the press when your son Richie was charged with the murder of Nancy Chavez," Eddie said, "and because I know someone who could be used."

Wood drummed the table with thick fingers, eyes spearing Eddie from under craggy brows. "I buy boys with slide rules to work my equations, bub. Right now I'm interested in Richie."

"You said you'd fight to your last penny to free him," Eddie said. "You won't have to. I'm going to spare you that expense."

Before Eddie was aware of movement, his lapel was clutched in a beefy hand, his midriff yanked against the table. The big, blunt face was

only inches from his, the eyes steaming.

"Bub, if you got some evidence, know something the police don't—"

Eddie somehow managed to smile his Bailey man-to-man, a quirk of the lips, a John Wayne tilt of the head. "The deal's a lot cooler than that, if you'll just stop manhandling me for a minute."

Wood released his grip. Eddie eased back, brushing the wrinkles from his jacket. "This person I mentioned who could be used, she happens to be the jury clerk as well as a friend of mine."

Eddie saw the warm shift in the steel-hued eyes.

"Well, now, that's what I call interesting," Wood said.

"I can guarantee you I'll be on the jury, working for a verdict you and Richie want to hear."

Wood rubbed his flattened lips with the knuckles of his left hand as he thought it over. "How much?"

"Twenty-five thousand dollars, pocket change to you," Eddie said, "payable the day Richie walks out of the courtroom a free man."

"If he walks out free, how will I know it was your doing, that he wouldn't have come clear anyway? I should pay you twenty-five grand for that?"

"It's up to you, Mr. Wood, if you want to take that kind of chance. But for twenty-five thou you'll know that he is free and that I was in the jury room. Like, you ever bought any better insurance?"

"Suppose the other eleven are a hard-nut bunch who want to railroad my kid?"

"They don't come that hard, Mr. Wood. I'll stick in there until Hell's Angels are teaching Sunday School."

"What if you're excused during the impanelling of the jury and an alternate juror takes your seat?"

"With the deal made, would your lawyers excuse me?"

"Don't act cute, bub! You know I'm talking about the prosecutor."

"Mr. Wood, please," Eddie sighed, "give me a little credit. When the prosecutor quizzes the jurymen, you think I'll let him see anything other than an alert, open-minded young man without anti-Establishment hangups?"

A faint hint of friendliness tugged the corners of Wood's mouth. "I swear, bub, I'm beginning to think you could pull it off."

"Trust me, Mr. Wood."

"But no money in advance, see?"

Eddie endured a small, inward groan, letting the hope

fade of talking Wood into a binder.

"The terms are fine, Mr. Wood," he said blandly. "The day Richie is freed I drop by and pick up twenty-five in the privacy of your home."

"You got a deal bub!" Wood said, leaning back.

"We've got a deal," Eddie amended. As Wood started to rise, Eddie said softly, "I trust your honesty, but if you shattered my faith, we'd both go to jail, on a charge of jury fixing. I'd just have to spill the beans, and you got so much more to lose than I have. Big trouble for yourself. Not to mention Richie standing trial again after a blaze of terrible publicity."

Halfway to his feet, Wood paused. He gravelled a laugh. "That's good, bub. You covered all the angles." He reached across and plumped Eddie on the shoulder. "You deliver, you'll get paid. We got what you might say is a perfect business understanding."

"We mustn't be seen together," Eddie reminded. "You won't hear from me again until the trial is over."

"Sure, bub. Total strangers fill the jury box." He knuckled Eddie lightly on the jaw. "Keep your nose clean. Stay out of drafts so you don't come down with a virus. I'd feel terrible if

you broke a leg or something and missed the trial."

With that bit of advice, Wood turned and barged out of the bar.

Two down, Eddie thought.

It took Eddie until three o'clock to track down Fleschetti. He found the lean, swarthy man in the bookie joint behind Rudeen's tavern. Fleschetti was sitting propped back against the dirty wall in a straight chair, his outthrust feet resting on the chair's twin. He was watching the tote board and chewing on a cigar.

Eddie threaded his way through the crowded, smoke-filled room.

"Hi, Mr. Fleschetti."

Fleschetti glanced up. He was about as attractive as a dagger-thrower for the Mafia, but he said pleasantly enough, "How ya, Eddie?"

There wasn't a vacant chair and Fleschetti didn't offer the one he was using for a hassock. Eddie bent a knee and half-sat, the wall supporting his back.

"I need a loan, Mr. Fleschetti."

"Sure, Eddie. You always paid up in the past, one way or another."

"Then my record ought to be good for a big chunk of bread this time."

"Yeah?" Fleschetti took the wet, ragtag, chewed end of the

cigar from his mouth. "How big?"

"A thou."

Fleschetti squinted, absently waving away a short, fat man who was bobbling over to talk to him.

"That's pretty big for a guru in your shoes, Eddie. How come?"

"I got a sure fire deal. But it'll keep me tied up for a few days starting Monday morning. Meantime, there's a long weekend."

"And a chick?" Fleschetti shook his narrow, oily face. "Always a chick with a guy like you, Eddie."

Fleschetti shrugged, dropped his feet to the floor. He reached inside his jacket pocket and took out a pad of printed forms about the size of a letter envelop. He scribbled in an amount with a ballpoint pen and handed pen and promissory note to Eddie for him to sign.

"You're borrowing twelve hundred, Eddie. You get a thou. Service charges, two hundred. Interest five percent per week, compounded weekly. Note payable by the week with the interest taken out first."

"I know," Eddie murmured. His eager fingers dashed his signature across the bottom of the note.

"I hope she's worth it, Eddie."

"She is," Eddie said, exchang-



ing the note for ten one-hundred dollar bills Fleschetti counted from a scuffed, bedraggled, two-inches-thick wallet.

"You asked for it, Eddie. I didn't make a pitch to sell you. I never do with my customers."

"Sure," Eddie said, cramming the money in his pocket.

Fleschetti swung his feet back up on the chair. "Don't forget I always collect, Eddie. I know a tough old shiv what's out of work. I'd hate the expense of putting him on the payroll and sending him around for a collection."

Eddie laughed. "Don't be such a worrier, Mr. Fleschetti. I always been good for it. This time I got a deal that'll make twelve c-notes look like chicken feed."

"Plus interest," Fleschetti reminded.

Out of the bar, Eddie dialed the courthouse and got Clara on her extension.

"Kitten, I just had some terrible news," he choked the words into the phone. "My aunt Hilgred, she's almost like a mother—" His voice broke.

"Eddie," Clara's voice was sharp with alarm, "what is it? Is she sick or something?"

"Terrible accident, Kitten. Car full of teenagers barreled into a shopping center parking lot and knocked her fifty feet as she was going to her car."

"How awful!"

"I've got to go out there, to Des Moines."

"Of course, Eddie. Can I do anything to help?"

"Just pray for the poor old lady, Kitten, even though you've never met her. I won't know the setup for sure until I get there, so I may not have a chance to call you until I get back."

"I understand, Eddie."

"I'll make sure aunt Hilgred is comfortable and getting the best of care. I'll be back Sunday night, ready for jury duty Monday morning."

"I'll be thinking about you every minute, Eddie."

"That's my Kitten. Bye now." He blew her a kiss, hung up, and made an aaagghh! face at the phone.

Joella opened her apartment

door a crack in answer to Eddie's rapping knuckles.

"Hi, doll." Before she could say anything, he put enough pressure on the door to brush his way inside.

Joella was a vision in a filmy pink shortie. Eddie's eyes took a dizzying ride over a leggy figure a showgirl would have envied. Her honey-gold hair was piled in casual, little-girl disarray atop her head. Her tanned face glistened from a careful massage with cleasing cream.

A glint of impatience made her doe-shaped green eyes a shade darker. "Eddie, I'm really very busy—"

He moved through the cozy, pleasantly pastel decor of the small living room and dropped on a Danish couch. He stretched, settled comfortably, thrusting out his legs and crossing his ankles.

"Yum-yum-yummy," he grinned at her. "Can anything so beautiful be real?"

"Thanks, friend. But I haven't time to listen now. I have to dress for dinner."

She walked to the couch, lifted her hand, and wiggled a slim, tapering finger in the direction of the door. "It's unlocked, Eddie. Close it on your way out."

"Now is that the sweetest doll in the world? Kitten, you

don't know how I've missed you."

"No rap, Eddie. I'm not listening."

"You'd like to."

She shook her head. The movement spilled a lock of hair from the careless, temporary upswept. It curled vagrantly about her cheek, making her all the more delectable in Eddie's eyes.

"Look Eddie," she said reasonably. "Be nice. Just run along. You're a great guy, except in the important department. I'm expensive, Eddie, and you always end up as an also-ran."

"Too bad I can't afford you."

She gave a little sigh, her green eyes holding with his for a brief second. "Maybe so, at that. But we've been through the routine before, haven't we? So leave it as friends. Don't spoil the bit that we had, Eddie."

He plucked at his lower lip.

"I really believe you're going to throw me out." He breathed out heavily. "In that case, what'll I do with this?" Reaching inside his jacket pocket, he drew out the wad of hundred-dollar bills. With a melodramatic movement, he threw them toward the ceiling. The cluster broke apart, and he watched the widening of Joella's green eyes as the bills

fluttered down about her.

"Some shower, doll," he chuckled. "Just the first drops. Plenty more where that came from."

He reached and took her slender wrist. She was gazing raptly at the clutter of money, making no resistance as he pulled her onto his lap.

"Time we turned in again, doll," he murmured against her ear.

She was a warm rustling, arms gliding about his neck. "I've missed you, Eddie. Really I have."

"So let's make up for lost time with a weekend in Las Vegas."

"You're beautiful, Eddie..."

At eleven o'clock Sunday night Eddie dragged his exhausted body and brain into his down-at-the-heels bachelor pad. He struggled out of jacket and necktie, tossing the garments on a chair that already held a dirty shirt and sweater. Grunting with the effort, he opened the hide-a-bed convertible couch, kicked off his shoes, and lowered his fatigued bones.

Tired as he was, he lay on his back grinning at the ceiling, licking his memory chops. What a weekend! It shimmered in his mind, an elysian haze. First-class accommodations on the jetliner...the swank of the Vegas hotel...the intimate

dinners... floor shows... the balconied room with the king-size bed... the smoky smoothness of expensive Scotch sipped beside the pool... the craps table...

All of it a lovely, lovely backdrop for the warmth of Joella's arms, the fire of her kisses.

They'd gone through every dime in four days, but Eddie kept that thought out of his mind. Right now, he didn't want anything to spoil the memories.

The skirling of the alarm clock reached into the deep vacancy of sleep earlier than usual the following morning. Eddie mumbled himself awake, reaching out to turn off the clock and lying there for a moment staring at nothing in particular. He was drearily hung-up with the idea of being penned in the jury box. He dosed himself with strong medicine, the thought of Baxter Wood's twenty-five thou. It gave him the energy to get out of bed.

He came out of the building an hour later, his appearance totally out of keeping with the messy apartment he left behind. Dressed conservatively and groomed to his fingernails, he might have been a bright young customer's man in a brokerage office.

A tension gnawed at him as

he drove downtown, parked the Toyota in an all-day lot, and walked into the impersonal fifteen-story stone mags of the courthouse.

He didn't doubt Clara, or himself, but he wouldn't feel really easy until he was actually on the Chavez jury.

The jury pool room on the fourth floor was filling with people of all shapes, sizes and colors when Eddie strolled in.

Clara appeared at nine o'clock sharp, in sensible skirt, blouse, flats, hair in a brown bun at her nape. She was carrying a clipboard and looked so drab and frumpy, compared to Joella in Vegas, that Eddie felt a little sorry for her.

She stood beside a desk in the corner of the room, introducing herself and reciting her routine jazz in a sing-song voice. She commended them all for answering the call to civic duty, mentioned the importance of the jury system under the American banner of freedom, and touched on the state laws governing responsibilities of jurymen.

Then she was calling out the lists, and a short time later Eddie was among the group being herded by a bored deputy into a huge courtroom. The vaulted expanse seemed to Eddie to have all the warmth of a mausoleum, when he took his

place, third chair front row, in the jury box.

The lawyers were shuffling papers and exchanging pleasantries at their tables. John Ward was the prosecutor, a lean, spare man with a grizzled face. Wood had retained the firm of Proctor, Proctor, and Adams to defend his son. Old man Proctor himself, who looked like a wily white-haired Mississippi senator, was in charge of the legal battery.

The bailiff rapped a gavel. All rose in the crowded courtroom as the judge entered. The bailiff called court to session with his "O-yez, O-yez."

The following hour was more nerve-wracking than Eddie had anticipated. Defense and prosecution questioned each juror in turn. The defense excused juror number eight, the prosecution five and nine. The alternates who took their seats were accepted. Eddie surreptitiously pressed a handkerchief in his wet palms and experienced a pleasant inner unwinding. The trial was underway, and he was in his twenty-five thousand dollar seat.

He slipped his first direct look at young Richard Wood, slouched at the defense table. The boy had the brawn, the bulldozer-operator look of his father. Aside from their years, the main difference in father



and son was visible in Richie's petulant, self-centered curl of lips. The punk kid, Eddie reflected, had the natural sneer of a spoiled brat.

During the two days of the trial, Eddie was struck by the lack of drama. In his television-conditioned mind, murder trials were drawn-out featurelengths of sudden surprises, witnesses cracking under cross-examination. Much of this one was conducted in voices at conversation level, with the florid judge sneaking a yawn behind his hand now and then.

The story came out in simple, bold terms, to Eddie's way of thinking. The evening of last June fifth a group of affluent young people got together for a lakeside party. Grass was smoked. Non-smokers washed down speed pills with beer.

High on speed, Richie Wood kept forcing his attentions on Nancy Chavez. The girl decided to leave the party. Richie followed her to her car. A little later, the others heard a scream. The boys rushed from the lake and saw a figure very much resembling Richie disappearing into the dark underbrush. A few yards from her car, they found Nancy Chavez, clothing torn. Dead. Strangled. Her screams cut off by a pair of powerful hands.

The prosecution said it was cut-and-dried. The defense said, not so; for isn't it just possible that the fleeing figure seen by the witnesses was a skulker about Richie Wood's size looking for a chance to loot parked cars?

The judge charged them, and the jury filed out. Seated in the private room adjacent to the courtroom, Eddie looked at the faces hovering about the long table. Butcher, baker, clothing maker. A housewife and a secretary. A salesman, used car appraiser, retired bookkeeper.

It was an ill-at-ease gathering, everyone glancing at the others, waiting for someone else to break the ice.

The retired man, a tall, skinny, gray wisp, cleared his throat. "Guess our first job is to elect a foreman."

"I'll nominate you," Eddie said. "And I move the nominations be closed. We don't have to waste a lot of time, seems to me. The prosecution didn't prove the man guilty beyond a shadow of doubt."

Resembling a side of his own beef, the butcher, on leave from his supermarket employer, snorted in derision. "Proved him guilty beyond a reasonable doubt! Plain as the nose on your face. The punk tried to rape that girl and grabbed her by the neck to shut her up."

Eddie cut the juror with a cool look. "I think we're all intelligent human beings who won't ruin a young man's life by jumping to conclusions."

He sensed that most of the others were with him, especially the plump housewife and the sickeningly pale secretary with the washed-out blue eyes.

"Mr. Foreman," Eddie suggested, "why not take a vote right now to see how we stand, how we may be split?"

"Sounds like a good, efficient idea," the old bookkeeper nodded. "How many think the boy is guilty?"

The butcher's hand went up. So did the salesman's and the tailor's. After a moment, when there was no other show of hands, the tailor indecisively lowered his. The salesman held out a minute longer. He shrugged, dropped his hand. "With a start like this, we'll never get a guilty verdict, and I got competition selling my customers every hour I'm in here."

The butcher stood alone, and Eddie relaxed in his chair knowing he had it made.

Shortly after nightfall, Eddie parked the Toyota in the shadows of the elm trees that lined the driveway of the Wood suburban estate. He got out and walked the few remaining yards to the imposing, white-columned colonial home.

Baxter Wood was waiting for him, standing as a shadow beside a wroughtiron veranda table.

"I guess we made it, Mr. Wood." Eddie felt that he was one big goosepimple of anticipation and excitement. He could hardly keep his voice from breaking into a delirious falsetto. "Had some trouble with one fellow, a butcher, but I carried the ball without a stumble."

"So you did, and I'm grateful." A note of real feeling was in Wood's voice. He thrust out a manila envelope. "Count it, if you like. It's all there. Twenty-five thousand in hundred and fifty dollar bills."

Eddie took the money with the feeling that he was swooning. Wood threw a meaty arm about his shoulders and walked Eddie to the edge of the veranda.

"Don't ever feel that we did anything wrong, young fellow. Remember that you gave my son—and me—a fresh chance. I've bought into some mining interests in Mexico, and I've had it out with Richie. He's going down there and make a man of himself, work in the earth, learn to sweat a little and eat plain, gut-sticking grub. Appreciate a cot in a mining camp when he flops after a day's honest labor."

Wood dropped his hand and looked out into the darkness. "Yes, young fellow, it should make a man of my son, this final chance for him to be a man."

"I'm glad to have had a part in it, Mr. Wood," Eddie said, anxious only to be away, paying off that bloodsucking loan shark Fleschetti, then blasting off to Joella.

"Good night, m'boy."

"So long, Mr. Wood."

Eddie nudged the speed laws as he drove back to his apartment. He left the Toyota in the no-parking strip in front of the scabby brick building. He would be inside just long enough for a change of shirts and a phone call to Joella.

He took the steps to the second floor two at a time, keyed open his door, clicked on the bed-sitting room light. Whistling merrily, he rummaged through the chest of drawers, finding a pink broadcloth in its laundry plastic.

He turned, heading toward the bath with the fresh shirt in his hands. Halfway across the room, he caught a movement out of the side of his vision. He stopped suddenly, with knees almost buckling.

Richie Wood was standing in the dark kitchenette doorway, as big, tough, and twice as mean looking as his father.

Heart pounding at the sudden sight of the intruder, Eddie clutched the back of a chair and swallowed the dryness in his throat. "Why... what..." he stammered. "How'd you get in here?"

"Simple," Richie said, taking a couple of grizzly bear steps into the bed-sitting room. "Good old dad told me about our juror to spare me strain during the trial. I looked you up in the phone book, climbed the fire escape, and broke the kitchen window. Then I waited, figuring you wouldn't be long in dashing in after the payoff."

Eddie backed a step, feeling an acid sweat eat suddenly across his face.

"Wh-what do you want?" he asked thickly, guessing already from Richie's presence, Richie's eyes, Richie's deadly determined manner what Richie wanted.

"The last thing I want is that deal the old fool has hatched for me in Mexico," Richie said. "Man, I'd blow my mind down there with those peons and time clocks and holes in the ground."

Eddie hugged the manila envelope stuffed under his belt. "No! You can't have it! It's my money!"

"Yeah?" Richie said, inexorably closing in. "Who you squawking to? The fuzz? Man,

how you going to report a theft you don't dare explain?"

Richie snapped his fingers. "Hand it over, punk. Have a heart. The old man has cut off my allowance, bought that one way ticket to Mexico, told the foreman down there to treat me just like the hired help. So make like a love-child, man. Return the Wood lettuce, to me. By the time I get through jetting off and having a twenty-five thousand dollar ball the old man will wish he'd never heard of mines in Mexico."

Richie's hand was reaching. Eddie lunged back. Richie lunged forward. The bleat from Eddie's lips was cut in half by the impact of Richie's fist.

Eddie slammed against the wall. Almost beyond feeling, he sensed that Richie had grabbed him by the neck and was banging his head against the dirty plaster. Then Richie, the room, the panic all vanished.

The apartment was filled with a deep-space silence when Eddie began to live again. The process was a torment. The pain in his head squeezed a thin moan through his lips. He was crumpled with his face against the musty-smelling carpet. He felt as if he was being put back together with a welder's torch. Even more painful was the knowledge that Richie Wood and the twenty-

five thousand were long gone.

He dragged himself up and slumped on the couch, two big tears filling his eyes. He knew he was going to have to make dull, dumb Clara feel lovely and adored for a long time.

He dredged up the strength to reach for the phone and dial Clara's number. She must have been sitting on her phone. She answered instantly.

He took a breath and gave it all he had, the Bailey special sockeroo, an intimate huskiness: "Baby, these last days have been endless without you."

"Me too, Eddie. Please hurry to me, Eddie. I've picked a wedding dress and—"

"Easy, Kitten," he smothered a groan. "We got to talk this thing over. I mean, something has come up. My deal fell through, and aunt Hilgred, she had to have emergency surgery."

"The poor dear!"

"She had nobody else to turn to, Kitten. I had to do what I could."

"Of course you did, Eddie."

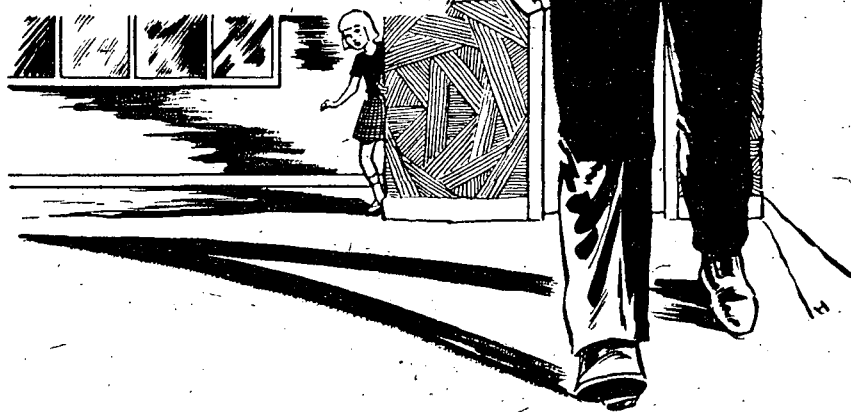
"So I wired a loan from a character named Fleschetti who sends out shivs to do his collecting. And I love you too much, baby, to have you see me if I was ugly. Like, with all my teeth missing or an ear lopped off..."

THE TERRIBLE THING

*No one could ever unlock
the grim riddle of old Miss
Prymm's garden of death—
no one but a little girl and
her very secret daydream . . .*

by **JERRY JACOBSON**

MY NAME is Judith Raye Harker and I am seven years old, and you may call me Judy. I hate being called Judith about as much as I hate Norman Puetz and his very cute pinches on my bottom.



My mother and father call me Judy and so does Grandma Harker and so does Grandpa Harker. My baby brother Milo does not call me either one, but says something like *Pfzzj* whenever I play with him or when my mother lets me feed him his baby food, and then begins playing with his toes. Rascal is my dog. He barks well for a dog and he also has very sweet breath for a dog. I think he sneaks into the bathroom when no one is looking and gargles with mouthwash.

I am in the third grade at Miss Prymm's School for Exceptional Children. It is way across town and my mother drives me there in the car in the mornings after we have had our hot oatmeal with toast and orange marmalade. Sometimes I like brown sugar or cinnamon on my oatmeal. You know that sometimes when you eat oatmeal and brown sugar and scrambled eggs in front of your baby brother, you can feel very guilty? You can, if all he has is baby food.

At Miss Prymm's School we have subjects in English, arithmetic, history, drawing, painting, music and Spanish. My Spanish teacher is Miss Flores. She also teaches English and music and has long black hair and sometimes brings things from Mexico for us to look at. She is always going to Mexico.

"*Señorita Harker, cierre la puerta, por favor.*" That is the way Miss Flores asks me to close the door of our classroom. "*Si, Señora Flores, con mucho gusto.*" That means I will be very glad to close the door. "*Gracias.*" That is Miss Flores thanking me. "*De nada, señora,*" I answer, saying she is welcome. We had an election. I am now the door monitor for Room 12.

I have two other teachers at Miss Prymm's School. Mr. Tremain teaches arithmetic and history and Miss Orr teaches painting and drawing. Sometimes they have lunch together in the arbor behind the school.

An arbor, in case you are wondering, is a place with trees and flowers and little benches of stone and a pond with goldfish and lily pads in it. At Miss Prymm's School the students are not allowed to go into the arbor. We have to stay on the playground at recess and at lunchtime, but the playground is a very nice place, with monkey bars and hopscotch and teetherball and a little garden with tags on all the flowers and plants so you can read their names and learn where they come from.

Every day when my mother says good-by to me at Miss Prymm's School, she tells me that I have been granted a gift from God and that I should thank him by learning all I can, and by

being polite to my teachers and schoolmates, not to whisper in class and to keep my dress clean. She says there are ever so many things in the world to learn and not nearly enough time, so I should treat a minute like a diamond and an hour like a handful of gold.

I think that my mother is very right about time being a very rich thing and so I have decided to begin a diary. A diary, in case you are wondering, is a record of your activities and also the things you have spinning in your head. My diary is a big notebook I bought at Shullenberg's Drugstore on Harvey Street for 25¢. It has a shiny red cover with a very nice painting of a leaping horse and the notebook has lines inside to keep you from writing downhill.

Sometimes I am marked down in my penmanship for writing downhill and my diary, now that I think of it, will be a very good help to correct that. I will put down here everything that I learn, and all the people I see and just about every thought that starts spinning in my head. That way, you can read it and learn everything that I have learned, and know everything and everybody I know. If it will help whoever is reading this, then that will make me very happy.

Did you know that there are separate schools for regular chil-

dren and separate schools for exceptional children? Down the street from where we live is the Horace Gatzert Public School. It is for regular children.

Tina Culp, my very best friend who lives across the street, goes to Horace Gatzert Public School. On weekends we play teatherball there and sometimes hopscotch, but not so much hopscotch because you can't see the lines. Horace Gatzert Public School does not have a very good hopscotch court and it does not have Spanish, or an arbor with flowers and trees and goldfish.

I don't know if that is because it is a regular school, or if it is because the people who run the school are poor, but something should be done about it, because some times when I am around the Horace Gatzert Public School, I feel very sad.

I am teaching Tina Culp Spanish, but she does not learn very well. She forgets the words and she does not have very good pitch.

Pitch is what you do when you make Spanish sound like music. There is high pitch, low pitch and middle pitch. I think Tina only pretends to want to learn Spanish so that I will go to Horace Gatzert Public School next year.

I asked my mother about that and she said, "You would not like it there as much as at Miss

Prymm's. You would not have things like Spanish and oil paints and community field trips two days a week, or Computa Teach."

I told Tina Culp what my mother said and it made her cry and she would not speak to me for three days, not even over the telephone, or would not take my applesauce cookies. We are friends again now, but it certainly looked like we would not be friends for a long time and to make up for causing Tiny Culp to cry, I played her five straight games on the hopscotch court at Horace Gatzert Public School, even though I could not see the lines.

You know what? We had St. Valentine's Day last week at our school. We made our own valentines out of colored paper and lace and I gave one to all of my schoolmates and I received one from them also.

At Miss Prymm's School we have a rule that says you have to give valentines to all of your schoolmates or not give a valentine to anyone. I think that is a very good rule because if you do not receive a valentine, it can make you sad enough to want to die. You also should not give treats to one friend and not to your other friends. Besides my schoolmates, I gave valentines to my teachers, to my father and mother, to Grandma and

Grandpa Harker, and even one to my baby brother Milo and to Tina Culp.

I also made a valentine for Rascal, but he took it out and buried it in the back yard. But I did not spank him for that because if you are given a valentine, you may do anything you want with it. But I still wish he hadn't torn it up and buried it because it did take quite a long time to make. I am now thinking it over if I want to give Rascal a valentine next year.

Also, I saw Mr. Tremain give a valentine to Miss Orr. He was in her room during lunch time. The door was open and so I looked inside and saw Mr. Tremain give her the valentine. Then Miss Orr kissed Mr. Tremain on the cheek and after that, Mr. Tremain kissed Miss Orr on the mouth. That doesn't mean they are going to get married, because Mr. Tremain is already married. Miss Orr is not married but I can tell she likes Mr. Tremain a lot.

I told Tina Culp about what I saw and Tina said, "I think it is perfectly all right to give kisses with valentines." Then I said, "I don't think it is all right *all the time*, because I kissed Norman Puetz on the cheek when I gave him his valentine and he punched me on the arm." We finally agreed it was all right to kiss people when you give them their valentines, except Norman

Puetz. Because he hits you very hard.

Friday we were taken to the Museum of Industry by Miss Prymm, Mrs. Flores, Miss Orr and Mr. Tremain. Everyone in the school went and it was quite an interesting visit. We saw the inside of a jet engine and how fish are made to grow bigger and we saw a very good movie on how paper is made from lumber.

In the movie, Mr. Tremain and Miss Orr sat in our row and they held hands. I looked down the row once and saw them. I certainly don't think holding hands while you are watching paper being made is very romantic. Tina Culp agreed that it was very silly to hold hands during something like that, but that adults sometimes did funny things and not to worry too much about it.

Then Tina asked me what I'd do if a boy ever tried to hold hands with me, a boy like Norman Puetz. I said that if Norman Puetz ever tried to hold hands with me I would first ask him politely not to do it. Then, if he kept trying to do it, I would punch him on the arm, even though I know I do not have a hard punch, and that is very rude for a girl to do.

But you know? There are just some people in this world who just will not listen to you until you punch them on the arm, or shout at them, or repeat some-

thing over and over again. I truly think the only way you could ever get someone like Norman Puetz to listen to you is to hit him on the arm. I really mean that. Now I am thinking, maybe I will just slap his hand, the one he is using to try to hold mine. If that doesn't work, then I will punch him on the arm.

You want to know something? A flower is a very complicated thing for its beauty. The first flower I looked into gave me quite a scare. It had a pistil, which is not the same as the kind a policeman has. And it had a stigma, which is not the same as getting an illness in your eye. It certainly can come as quite a shock to you when something you always thought was simple turns out to be very complicated.

Did you know that Mr. Tremain gives flowers to Miss Orr? He does, all the time. In the mornings he puts them in a vase on her desk and he also gives them to her wrapped in green paper. Once when they were in the arbor behind the school, I saw Mr. Tremain pick a purple flower and put it in Miss Orr's hair.

That was the second time I saw them kiss. I was very frightened because as I said before we are not allowed in the arbor. I was not seen because I was hiding down behind some thick bushes next to the white archway. You

know what else frightened me? When I was watching them kiss, a leaf came up and tickled my nose and I almost sneezed. But I pinched my nose with my fingers and said Jimmy Durante to myself ten times. That always works.

I told Tina Culp about stopping my sneeze and she just nodded, very seriously like a doctor and said, "Yes, I think that would work as a cure." You know, sometimes I think Tina Culp knows a lot more things than I do. She may not be very good at Spanish and she may be a little clumsy doing Spanish dances, but she is very smart in other ways just the same.

And one of the things she is smart about is that Mr. Tremain is in love with Miss Orr. Tina explained that when people gave valentines and flowers and kissed and went so far as to hold each other's hands in a movie about making paper, well there just wasn't any doubt about it being love.

And when I told Tina I didn't think that was possible because Mr. Tremain was already married, Tina said it didn't always work out that way. She said adults could love *two people* at the same time and that that was the beginning for divorce. When you stopped loving one of the people and just loved the other one alone. And when that hap-

pened to you, Tina told me, the law decided that you had to stop living with the first person and go and live with the second person.

Tina said, "That was the way it had been with my Uncle Vernon and my Aunt Charlotte."

We both agreed that divorce was very sad. Tina said it was more sad for her because she could not have her Uncle Vernon around whenever they went for dinner at her Aunt Charlotte's, and she could not be taken by him to the amusement park, or for rides in his pick-up truck, or to see any Dracula movies.

Right then and there, we made a pact that when we grew up, we would see to it that there was a law made to keep people from loving each other and getting divorced. And then, if anybody broke the law, well Tina and I would see to it that they got put in jail for ten years, or until they started loving the other person again.

So it sure does look like Mr. Tremain loves Miss Orr and will have to go and live with her and not his wife any more. I hope divorce doesn't mean you have to teach at another school, because both Mr. Tremain and Miss Orr are very good teachers.

I told Tina that maybe there wouldn't be any divorce and Tina shook her head. She said people do not hold hands in movies

about making paper from lumber unless they are in love.

This afternoon I went to Shullenberg's Drugstore and bought a second 25¢ notebook. It had a picture of an ancient sailing ship on it and I put my first notebook, which was filled, in the bottom drawer of my bureau where I have my underwear and my Scrabble game and my woolen knee-lengths, and the chess set my father gave me for my birthday.

Did you know that all of the chessmen move in different directions? They do. The ones called bishops are religious figures and can only go sideways. The ones called castles can go up and down and from side to side as far as they like until they bump into something. The ones called knights have horses heads and can only go in an L-shaped direction, but can jump over the tops of things they are about to bump. I think that is because horses are very good at jumping and bishops and castles are not. Who ever saw a preacher jump up and down in the air like a silly person? And who ever saw a stone castle jump right up off its basement?

I have played my father three games of chess and he has won every game. The first time I beat him he has promised me a dollar, so I am secretly planning how to get his king in the next game, because that is what it takes to



win. After I win his king, we will shake hands like all chess players do when the game is over, except that my father and I will also kiss and hug. And then I will give my dollar to the poor people.

Something very unusual happened today at school during lunchtime. I was walking past Miss Orr's room to look inside and see if Mr. Tremain had put any new flowers on her desk. The door was closed. It was strange, because that was the first time I ever saw her door closed at lunchtime.

I walked up to it and placed my ear against a crack, all the time afraid someone would come along and see me. What I heard inside I just couldn't believe. I heard arguing. And shouting. Mr. Tremain and Miss Orr were having a terrible fight. I could not make out any of their words, but there wasn't any doubt about their fighting. And then, right in the middle of their argument there was a loud slap and I knew that Miss Orr had hit Mr. Tremain in the face.

I mean, I could not see, but I know Mr. Tremain would never hit a lady as nice as Miss Orr and besides, the slap did not sound as deep and heavy as it would have if Mr. Tremain had done it. They didn't say another word to each other. Then I got very frightened because then, Mr. Tremain started walking across the room towards the door, his shoes hitting very hard on the floor.

Well when I heard *that*, I ran over to a corner where there was a brass fire extinguisher and I began to look at it. I did it very seriously, so if anyone saw you, they would just think you were studying the brass fire extinguisher.

And then I saw the doornob turn and I couldn't breathe at all. I tried with all my might to keep my eyes on that fire extinguisher and not on Mr. Tremain when he came out of the room.

"Judith, what are you doing here?" Mr. Tremain said when he saw me.

I told him I was looking at the fire extinguisher and boy, the hard look he gave me said he didn't believe *that* any more than if I'd told him I was holding up the building. His face and neck could have been a mask cut out from the cover of my red notebook. It was the first time Mr. Tremain had not smiled at me when he saw me.

It seemed a very long time before Mr. Tremain went off down the hall, so long that there just wasn't anything left of that fire extinguisher I hadn't looked at a hundred times and knew by heart.

When he was gone I saw the door was open and I went over and peeked inside. What I saw hurt me very much. Miss Orr was sitting at her desk with her hands over her eyes, crying very hard. I wanted to help her but I didn't dare go in. I held my breath and kept my left eye closed and just kept watching.

Then very suddenly Miss Orr picked up the vase filled with the beautiful yellow flowers and threw the vase to the floor. Pieces of it went flying everywhere and the flowers scattered all over and the water on the vase made little puddles everywhere.

All of what I saw made me very sick to my stomach. I ran down to

Mrs. Vanni's office. She is our school nurse.

She made me lay on a couch and asked me what I had for lunch and I told her tomato-rice soup, tuna blimps, two brownies, celery sticks and milk. She took my temperature and gave me two white pills and in a little while my stomach ache went away. I didn't say anything to Miss Vanni about Mr. Tremain and Miss Orr because it seemed to me that was gossip and you should never tell gossip about other people's private business.

But after school, I did tell Tina Culp. She said the whole thing was very confusing and would like to think it over while we played jacks. Tina does her very best thinking while she is playing jacks.

Finally, while she was doing her foursies, she told me it didn't look like there would be a divorce after all. She said, "I don't believe people who argue and slap one another and make one another cry are really and truly in love." I thanked Tina for explaining it all out for me and then I took her to Shullenberg's Drugstore and bought her a pecan nut ice cream bar. I feel if someone helps you with a very complicated problem, you should always try and give them a treat to show your appreciation.

I now have learned something very important about making a

diary. Making a diary is a very great responsibility because you must be very honest in what you put in and that takes up a lot of your time. And also, if you make a diary you have to put in the bad things as well as the good things. And bad things only hurt you and make you get sick to your stomach. But I promised I would write everything down and you should never break a promise to someone because that person will never trust you to do anything important for them ever again.

The bad thing that happened, the terrible thing that happened, happened in the arbor at lunch time. It was a very sunny day and I was playing hopscotch with Agnes Breeding, and I was getting very upset. You see, Agnes Breeding was cheating by not leaping the square her rock was in. And also by calling Overs everytime she lagged her rock onto a line. There isn't any rule I know of that says you can have Overs like that. You can have Overs if a boy pushes you when you are about to toss. Or if you trip, or start to giggle, or get a case of hiccups, or if someone is making a monsterface at you to get you to miss. But *not* for anything like lagging onto a line.

Well, when Agnes Breeding did that the second time I calmly told her, "I do not wish to play with you any more," and I walked off. I went out behind the school

taking the flagstone path that goes to the arbor, because I was very mad at Agnes Breeding and I did not want her following after me, or talking to me or anything. I was going to sneak around to the arbor where it was peaceful and quiet, so I could think if I wanted Agnes Breeding for a friend any more, and how long I would go without talking with her.

Believe me, losing a friend is a very serious matter and it takes a lot of thinking.

I walked very close to going under the white archway. That was when I saw Mr. Tremain and Miss Orr.

They were sitting together on one of the stone benches, only not as close together as all the other times. Their voices were very low and I got down behind the same bush that had made me sneeze, only this time I stayed my distance from the leaf that had almost made me sneeze.

And then I looked at Miss Orr's hair and I knew that they did not love each other any more and that Mr. Tremain would not get his divorce. I knew it to be sure because Miss Orr did not have a purple flower in her hair.

She was sitting very stiff on the bench, like a cardboard poster of herself. Her lips were very tight and she was not smiling with them. You could tell that she was thinking she would

never smile with them again.

That was when it started to get very terrible. I got a feeling like my heart had gotten into my throat and I knew if I wasn't careful, I would cry.

Then I heard Mr. Tremain say, in a loud voice, "Rosemary, you're being a fool. I see no reason why it can't continue just as it has been for us."

And then Miss Orr said it couldn't continue because of the baby. That was a very confusing thing to say because I couldn't see anything of a baby anywhere.

And then Mr. Tremain was talking. He said: "I'm going to pay for everything, Rosemary. Don't you understand that? I'm taking care of it. Right at this point, it is a social necessity that it be taken care of immediately. Are you such a puritanical little fool you can't even see that?"

And then Miss Orr said, right back at him, in a very angry voice. "My baby will not be taken care of! Not that way! Not your way!"

They kept shouting that way, back and forth, but Mr. Tremain was doing most of the shouting. He was so mean to Miss Orr that she began to cry again, the hardest I ever saw a grownup cry, just the shaking way she had cried that time in her classroom when she threw the vase and flowers on the floor. She moaned and held onto her stomach and

rocked that way and you would almost think that she was holding a tiny baby there and singing it to sleep.

Then it looked like the arguing was all over, because Miss Orr took a very deep breath and got up from the bench. She began walking straight for the white archway. Then she stopped and look up into the sky and her eyes looked so deep it seemed like she was trying to look straight through the universe. Everything was very still and the only sound was the sound of Miss Orr crying.

And then what Miss Orr did next gave me a chill about as cold as if Dracula had his old pale hand right on my back. Miss Orr bent over and picked up this very large rock that was laying in the dirt next to the path. And then she walked up behind Mr. Tremain very softly. And then she brought the rock up over her head and crashed it down on Mr. Tremain's head. She didn't let go of the rock when it hit him, but brought it up over her head and hit him again and then a third time until Mr. Tremain fell off the stone bench and onto the flagstone walk.

Miss Orr looked very frightened then. She let go of the rock like it was some old, dead animal and then started walking very fast toward me through the archway and for a minute I

couldn't think what to do. And then I saw a small hole in the bushes in front of me. I took one last look at Miss Orr wiping the tears from her face with her hand and then I crawled into the hole as fast as I could and watched Miss Orr's white shoes go flying past me like small white birds flying after bugs in the garden.

When she was gone, I crawled back out and wiped the dirt from my dress and watched the scratch on my knee. I had to watch *something* because I sure didn't want to look at Mr. Tremain.

I ran out of the arbor and into the school and went to Miss Vanni's office again. I was very cold and was told to lie down. Miss Vanni covered me with a blanket and sent for Dr. Railsback. He phone for my mother and she came to school. Dr. Railsback told her I was in shock and that she should keep me warm and give me a dinner of soup and that I would be better in the morning.

But in the morning I didn't feel better and I didn't feel like going to school. I told my mother it was because I had a fever, but she took my temperature and said I was normal. She scolded me for pretending. I was sick so that I would not have to go to school. I tried to tell her what I'd seen in the arbor the day before, but no words would come out.

I was so scared. It was just like when you see the monster in the horror movie and he is so horrible you can't even scream. You know you have to make a scream come out so you will be saved, or so the monster will be frightened away. But you just *cannot* make a scream.

In the evening my father came into my room and sat with me. We played a game of Scrabble and afterwards he hugged me and asked me why I was afraid to go to school, but I just couldn't say it. I couldn't say I had been in the arbor without permission and I couldn't say I saw Miss Orr hit Mr. Tremain with that rock.

A little later, Dr. Railsback came and gave me two spoons of red medicine, and then my mother came in and hugged me and kissed me and told me she was sorry that she yelled at me in a scold. And you want to know something? It is a very nice thing to have your mother and father around when you are sick or very afraid. It is also very nice to have your dog in your room, especially if he is a dog like Rascal. And it is also very nice to have a friend like Tina Culp who calls you on the telephone to ask how you are feeling and if you can play on Saturday. Believe me, these are the most important things in the whole world.

Another thing that is very important is a diary. I didn't know



that, you could say things to a diary that you couldn't possibly say to any person. Even though I am frightened and cannot tell anything to people, my diary listens like a good friend and lets me say anything I want. You see, I know my diary will not laugh at me, or make jokes or giggle if I tell it something foolish or personal or very important. And because my diary is such a good friend, I think I will change my mind about not wanting to ever do another diary.

You want to know something? Today is Saturday and Mr. Tremain is dead. I heard my mother and father talking about it when

I went to the bathroom. They said the police think he fell in the arbor and hit his head, only Mr. Tremain didn't die that way. Miss Orr did it when she hit him over the head with that rock and then ran from the arbor.

But you know, in my opinion, it really wasn't all Miss Orr's fault, because Mr. Tremain talked loud to her and was mean to her and he made her cry. And he wouldn't help Miss Orr find the baby and called her a purical little fool and I am sure just from the way Mr. Tremain said it, that that is not a very nice thing to say to a lady.

On Sunday, my mother brought in some clean clothes. I was still very sick about not being able to say anything to anyone except my diary. She had been ironing. My clothes were my polka-dot jumper, my white blouse with ruffled sleeves, some knee-lengths and my underwear.

When she put my underwear in the bottom drawer of my bureau, she saw my first red notebook with the horse on the cover. When she asked me about it, I told her it was my diary, and that she and father could read it to see if my English is improving and to see what I am learning and thinking. But I told her not to show it to Milo, my baby brother, because he cannot read yet. And not to show it to Rascal, because he would only tear it up and then bury it in the backyard.

For dinner I had split pea soup, toasted cheese sandwiches and chocolate pudding with a big squiggle of whipping cream on top. I cannot explain why, but I was as hungry as a hobo on the railroad trains. I felt like I had not had a single thing to eat since I was born and that I was eating the last food there was in the whole world.

My father came into my room while I was eating and looked very surprised that I was being a pig. He put my first diary back in my bureau and said it was very good.

I am writing this in my second diary, after my father took it to read, just like the first and well, you just wouldn't *believe* what is happening right at this *very moment* in our house.

Mr. Adamson, my father's lawyer, is here and so is a police detective in a rumpled suit like Mr. Columbo on television. They are all fussing over me just like I was the first lady president and are asking me so many questions.

I just don't know who to answer first. I sure wish Tina Culp was here! She would laugh herself silly and you wouldn't be able to stop her even if you were the champion grump of the whole world!

One of the most serious questions they asked me was if everything in my diaries was true.

Well, I just looked back at all of them very seriously—at Mr. Adamson and the detective and my father—and I said, "Every word of it is true." Believe me, I got so angry, I could feel my eyes crossing.

I politely said to them all what my father had taught me, that the very worst thing a person could do was to tell a lie, that it was like not helping old people when they were sick, and like not giving some of your money to the poor people, and like not doing what you promise. Well, when I said all that, everyone got as quiet as church and began nodding very seriously.

When they all finally left my room, well I can't tell you what a relief that was! I mean, it was like being in a telephone booth with just about everybody you know! I called Rascal and he climbed up on my bed and sloped on me with his very lappy tongue until I thought I would need a towel.

I told him that my dinner was just fine and how was his. And then I said that my dinner was so good I felt like an old football that had too much air in it, and that I was going to have a nice, warm little nap, if that was all right, and Rascal found his spot where he always likes to lay and then we both took our naps.

When I woke up it was almost two o'clock in the afternoon and I

was very glad it was still Sunday. I stretched until I thought I could shake hands with God if I wanted to and I felt very good about everything.

What I am writing down now is just about the most exciting thing in my whole diary! You may not believe this, but I am going to a court room! I will get to see a judge in his black robe and lawyers talking about their cases to the jury. The jury, in case you didn't know, is twelve people who decide if the one on trial did a bad thing and should be punishment, or didn't do a bad thing and should go free. They have an election among themselves to decide on it, almost the way I was elected to be Door Monitor in Miss Flores' Spanish class and the way Eunice Zaler was elected to be Windows Monitor.

When we got to the court room, my mother and father and the detective who does what Mr. Columbo does all say that the judge might ask me questions about the things in my diary, if they are true. They have told me that I should not be afraid to answer, because just about everybody there will be my friend. I said I wouldn't be afraid at all, that I would sit up in that chair next to the judge and answer all my questions the very best I possibly can.

Just now I am feeling much better. I got up and dressed and

then asked if I could call Tina Culp and ask her if she would like to play teatherball at Horace Gatzert Public School, because it really did seem a shame to spoil the rest of Sunday.

I am back from playing with Tina Culp now and it was a fine time. When I told her she was invited to go with me to the courtroom, she just about jumped out of her sneakers!

While we were walking back from the playground, we talked about whether we would say anything to the judge about how to stop people from being divorced and how you could make a law saying people could not get married unless they truly loved each other. I mean, that was the reason why Mr. Tremain was dead, and why Miss Orr had cried and did not know what to do with the baby and had hit Mr. Tremain with the rock, even after holding hands with him in the movie, and getting kissed by him, and having flowers from him all the time.

We finally agreed that we should tell the judge all those

things, but that maybe the courtroom was not the best place. So we decided to write him a letter putting everything we had to tell him in it, with Tina writing it because she has the best penmanship. But we would both sign our names.

And very last of all, before Tina went in for dinner, she made me promise to keep our judge awake in his chair, when I am answering my questions. I told Tina I would definitely promise that. I promise her that if I saw our judge wasting time in a nap, well I would just get out of my chair and walked right up and shake him awake and very nicely tell him that a minute should be treated like a diamond and an hour like a handful of gold. And I will also tell him about all the new things there were to be learned in that courtroom and that he sure better not fall asleep and miss any of them.

In fact, I will tell him that you should always try to learn things *wherever you are*, and remember them all. Or, of course, get them down in a diary. If you have one.

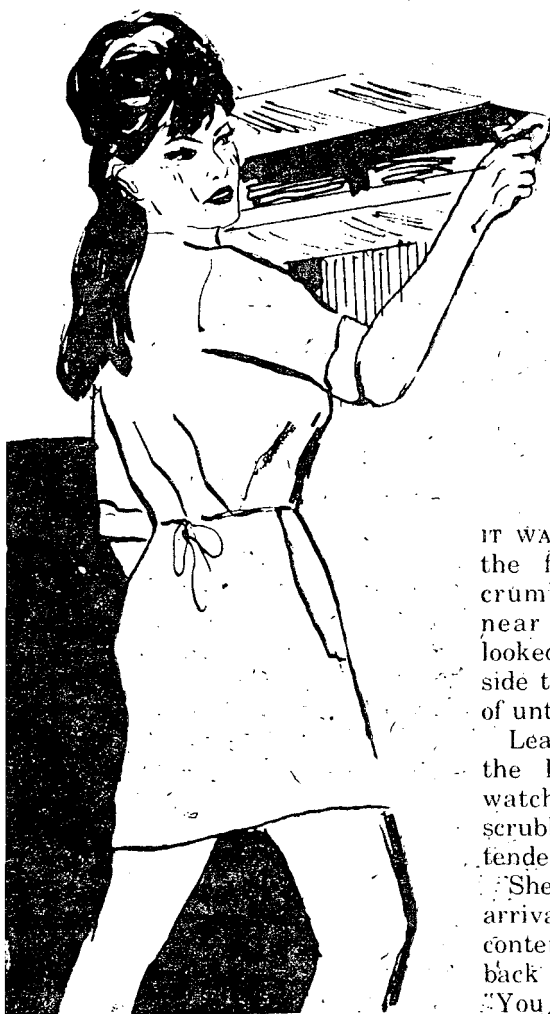


The ONLY MAGAZINE featuring MIKE SHAYNE every issue!

Miguel had disappeared, and his wife didn't care. She threw his father out—her biggest mistake.

HOUR OF RECKONING

by
HERBERT
HARRIS



IT WAS the siesta hour, and in the fierce Catalan sun, the crumbling adobe farmhouse near the great Ebro river looked a blazing white. But inside there was only a shambles of untidy squalor.

Leaning against the frame of the kitchen door, old Pedro watched his daughter-in-law scrubbing the floor. She pretended to ignore him.

"She had been startled by his arrival, but then the sullen, contemptuous look had crept back to her dark brooding face. "You, again?" she had said, sour

and unwelcoming as she always was to him.

"Where's my son, Miguel?" he asked.

A shrug, then: "How should I know? Gone off somewhere, I'd say."

"Miguel never goes off. He never goes far without telling someone. Nobody's seen him."

He waited, watching, but she was silent. He disliked her so much that the sight of her made him sick. What could have prompted Miguel to marry this trollop?

The magnetism of her body, no doubt? Well, just look at her. Every curving line screaming out at you. The low-cut, skin-tight dress displaying most of her breasts, outlining the full hips and buttocks as she leaned over to scrub.

"You got rid of Miguel," he said, narrowing the black eyes in the wrinkled, mahogany face.

The girl paused abruptly, then went on scrubbing.

"For a long time you've wanted him out of the way. . . to leave the field clear for you and that hired man Luis. Isn't that right, Juanita?"

She paused again, straightening to push the untidy black hair away from her face. Great sweat stains showed up dark on her soiled dress, and the perspiration rolled down the pale

olive cheeks to give them a glassy sheen.

"I've seen you and Luis," Pedro persisted. "Behaving like animals. It's what you want all the time, isn't it, Juanita? My Miguel was no good to you, so you got rid of him."

She turned, eyes blazing, mouth and nostrils working. "You madman!" she cried. "They should put you away in a home, you babbling old lunatic!"

The old man went on watching her.

"Luis! Luis!" she screamed out in a sudden fit of hysteria.

From somewhere behind Pedro, the boy Luis appeared. Younger than Miguel, the old man thought. Younger even than Juanita. But she would appreciate his virility, no doubt.

The young vineyard-worker looked scared and pale. As he glanced helplessly at the girl, she shouted: "Throw the old imbecile out!"

Pedro spat contemptuously and pushed Luis roughly aside. "Don't worry, I'm going," he said. "I only came to ask what you have done to my son Miguel."

"I know nothing. . . nothing!" Luis said, his eyes wide with fright.

Pedro fixed him with a hard look, then turned away. He

threw a last backward glance at Juanita. She was glaring at him, the great mounds of her breasts heaving.

"I'll be back again soon," he threatened her, "and I shall bring my other son."

"You do that!" she screamed. "You bring the whole dam' police force... the army... what you like!"

The old man walked away, shutting his ears to the girl's abuse and half-crazed laughter, and made for the old sun-baked village of Villaroja.

In a small *taverna* in the village, he bought a glass of the heavy, harsh Catalan *vino*, and sat deep in thought for almost half-an-hour.

Presently, when his eldest son, Fernando, walked in, the old man got up from his chair to greet him eagerly.

Fernando had done well out of fish-salting and had never married. Pedro was glad. It would have been a tragedy if he had made the same mistake as his younger brother and married a dirty little slut like Juanita.

"Fernando," the old man said, "I have a terrible feeling about Miguel."

"How so, Father?"

"I have been to his vineyard. There is no sign of him. He was to meet me at my place to talk about a small loan I had prom-



ised him, and he never turned up."

"What does Juanita say?"

The old man's face darkened. "Nothing! What can you expect from that slovenly tart? She's got eyes only for young Luis, the new hand."

Fernando looked glum. He knew his father was right. Juanita's appeal was purely physical. She had no interest at all in keeping house, and Miguel's home was a pig sty.

"I think," Pedro said, leaning forward intently, "that Juanita and her lover have done away with him!"

Fernando swung upon him, staring. "What are you saying, Father? Have you gone crazy?"

The old man shook his head. He leaned forward more closely. "Listen, my son, to what I have to say. . ."

Pedro spoke for a long time in a low voice. The eldest son listened, frowning and nodding.

Presently the two men rose, nodded to the keeper of the *taverna*, and walked with grim determination into the hot dusty main street of Villaroja.

They made one important call before going down the hill to the area near the river where Miguel had started his small vineyard.

The old man came once again to the dilapidated adobe cottage, this time with the taller

and stronger of his two sons.

They pushed open the kitchen door, and saw Luis sitting in a big wooden kitchen chair with Juanita sprawled across his lap. She was crushed hard against him, cupping his jaws in her hands, kissing his mouth hungrily with tiny whimpering noises.

She became aware of their presence and wrenched herself from the arms of Luis. She stood glowering at them, flushed and panting, wild-eyed, smoothing out the stained tight dress.

"What do you want?"—the question was like the spitting of a cat.

"We have come about my brother," Fernando said evenly.

"I told your father to get out and stay out!" Juanita cried. She backed against the old kitchen stove on which a stew-pot simmered, as though her visitors might suddenly do her violence.

Luis stood watching warily, his eyes full of fear. Fernando turned on him suddenly, and the boy flinched, raising a shaky hand to hide the twitching in his cheeks.

"Where's Miguel?" Fernando demanded.

"I don't know! I don't know!" Luis cried, his face white.

"You killed him," Fernando said. "She made you do it. She

made you kill him, didn't she?"

"No! No!" Luis shouted desperately. "*She* did it. . . *she* killed him!"

Juanita's staring dark eyes smoldered with an insane glow. "He's mad," she said. "Can't you see the snivelling little rat is out of his mind?"

Tears of terror and remorse welled in Luis' eyes, and his voice was almost a sob.

"She killed him," he repeated. "They quarrelled this morning, here in this room. He turned away. She drove the carving knife into his back. . . straight through his heart."

"He's mad, mad, mad!" Juanita shouted hoarsely.

"She was glad," Luis blubbered. "Miguel had bought insurance on his life. She was anxious to collect the money. . . sell the vineyard. . . take me away with her. . . right away."

"He's lying!" Juanita screamed. "Don't listen to him!" She rocked to and fro, her hands clapped over her ears, her streaming black hair all over her face.

"She made me take the body away," Luis sobbed. "It was terrible. . . blood all over the floor. . . she said, 'Throw his body in the river'. I took it down there in a sack."

Luis slumped into the big wooden chair, burying his face

in his hands. Pedro stood silent, staring down at the floor, his lined face drawn with sadness. "Perhaps, . . after all, Miguel is better out of it," he murmured.

Fernando put an arm about his father's shoulders, but withdrew it just as swiftly as Juanita uttered a cry like a wild animal.

She stood now with the big stewpot in her hands, clutching the handle like a weapon. "Don't come near me, or you'll get this!" she warned. "It's boiling. . . so God help you."

Fernando walked towards her and she flung the pot. He stepped aside and threw his arm up protectively. He heard Luis scream as the scalding stew poured down his face.

Juanita ducked past them and rushed into the next room. Fernando dashed after her, with Pedro close behind. But both men were pulled up short.

From a heap of jumble in a corner of the room, Juanita had produced a double-barrelled shotgun. She was levelling it at them.

Fernando recognized the gun. It was one Miguel had always used for killing wildfowl on the river.

"Stand still," she cried. "Stay where you are and don't move, or I'll blast you both to hell!"

Miguel's father and brother watched her almost with pity.

She was like a cornered jungle beast, glaring at them fiercely.

They watched her back away inch by inch towards a door, watched the finger curled threateningly round the gun's trigger.

Juanita reached the door. She pressed the butt of the gun into her groin, keeping it levelled at them with one hand, the finger still on the trigger. She reached out backwards with her free hand, pulled the door open.

Suddenly, two arms flashed out, grasping her, swinging the gun vertical. There was a blast of fire, and the shot smacked against the ceiling. The gun clattered to the floor and Fernando jumped forward and snatched it up.

"Zorra! Perra! Maritornes!" the words rolled out of the big chest of Inspector Gomez of the Villaroja Police, as the girl struggled in his arms, clawing and biting.

Two of the *guardias* who had accompanied the Inspector hurried forward and seized Juanita.

Inspector Gomez straightened

his uniform and dusted himself down. "A good job," he remarked to Pedro, "that you had the presence of mind to call at the *Comisaria* first."

"She murdered Miguel," the old man said. There was only a kind of defeated weariness in his voice now.

Fernando watched Luis being led to the car. Fernando felt a pang of pity. "The boy merely got rid of the body," he said.

"I heard everything," Inspector Gomez told him. "I was near the kitchen window." He looked at Pedro with admiration. "That was a shrewd bit of deduction, my friend, which led you to call on me at the *Comisaria*."

The old man nodded.

"Well, ask yourself," Pedro murmured, "does a slut like that ever get down on her knees to scrub the kitchen floor... unless it is to remove evidence... like blood stains? And even if she did decide to scrub the floor, would she do it in the siesta hour with the sun at its hottest? Today, Inspector, the siesta hour was Juanita's hour of reckoning."



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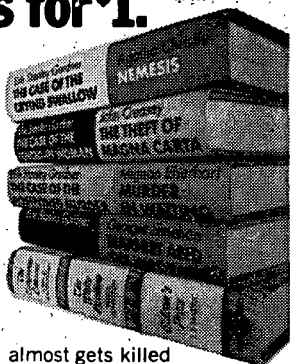
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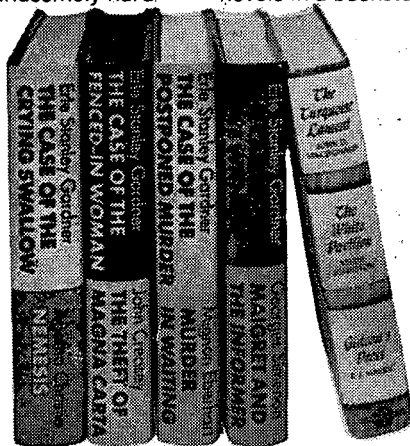
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